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presents

THE SON OF HEAVEN

A Tragic Melodrama

BY

LYTTON STRACHEY

Performed by Miss GERTRUDE KINGSTON with Actors from Cambridge University and others

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In aid of the funds of the

LONDON SOCIETY *for* WOMEN'S SERVICE

on Sunday Evening, July 12th, at 8.15
& Monday Afternoon, July 13th, at 2.30

at

THE SCALA THEATRE

Proprietor - Dr. E. DISTIN MADDICK, C.B.E.
Licensee - - - - - D. A. ABRAHAMS

Extracts from the Rules made by the Lord Chamberlain.—1.—The name of the actual and responsible Manager of the Theatre must be printed on every playbill. 2.—The Public can leave the Theatre at the end of the Performance by all exit and entrance doors, which must open outwards. 3.—Where there is a fireproof screen to the proscenium opening it must be lowered at least once during every performance to ensure its being in proper working order. 4.—Smoking is permitted in the auditorium. 5.—All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept free from chairs or any other obstructions, whether permanent or temporary.

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THE SON OF HEAVEN

A Tragic Melodrama

By LYTTON STRACHEY

Characters in the Order of their Appearance

1st Eunuch	Mr. R. MEDLEY
2nd Eunuch	Mr. J. S. STRACHEY
3rd Eunuch	Mr. C. MEDLEY
Li—*Head Eunuch in the Palace*	Mr. DENIS ROBERTSON
Wang Fu—*A Provincial Official*	Mr. GEOFFREY WEBB
Prince Tuan, Duke Lan } *Leaders of the Boxers*	Mr. G. G. TOMLIN, Mr. HILARY WADDINGTON
1st Manchu	Mr. I. B. JEFFCOTT
2nd Manchu	Mr. F. S. C. HOLLAND
Jung Lu—*Commander-in-Chief in Pekin*	Mr. T. MARSHALL
The Empress Dowager	Miss GERTRUDE KINGSTON
The Emperor of China	Mr. DENNIS ARUNDELL
Ta-he—*A Lady-in-Waiting*	Miss B. HOWE
Lady Ling, 2nd Lady, 3rd Lady, 4th Lady } *Ladies-in-Waiting*	Miss J. STRACHEY, Mrs. ALEC PENROSE, Mrs. T. MARSHALL, Miss E. NORTON
Kang—*A Reformer*	Mr. S. TOMLIN
Executioner	Mr. R. PARTRIDGE
Li Hung Chang—*Commanding the Southern Army*	Mr. A. DAVIDSON

Eunuchs, Manchus, Guards and European Soldiers:—Messrs. J. Brakewell, G. Brennan, E. O. Burgess, R. S. Lavers, R. W. Maitland, B. H. Murray, D. Saunders, S. H. Sheppard, G. Webb.

ACT I.
The Throne Hall of Heavenly Purity in the Winter Palace, Pekin.

ACT II.
The Garden of the Palace.

INTERVAL.

ACT III.
Same as Act I—Night.

ACT IV.
Courtyard in the Palace Precincts—Early Morning.

The Action passes on the 14th—15th August, 1900.

The Play is produced by Mr. ALEC PENROSE.

Scenery and Costumes designed by Mr. DUNCAN GRANT.
Scenery executed by Mr. Alick Johnstone.
Costumes made by Mrs. Alec Penrose and Madame Gravé. Wigs by Gustave.

Incidental Music Composed and Conducted by Mr. W. T. WALTON.

Orchestra:—Miss C. Balfour, Miss Bloomfield, Miss Clark, Miss Gibbon, Mr. C. Lambert, Miss D. Lucas, Lady McCormick, Miss L. Mair, Miss D. Nutting, Mr. A. Pott, Mr. G. Sturt, Miss E. White, and others.
Pianoforte lent by Messrs. John Broadwood.

Stage Director: Mr. FREDERICK G. LLOYD.
Programme Cover—"The Son of Heaven," in Chinese characters by VANESSA BELL.

An interval of 15 minutes is arranged between Acts II and III. *Will the Audience kindly remain seated between Acts I and II and Acts III and IV.*

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Dramatis Personae.

The Emperor of China
Jung Lu, Commander in chief in Pekin
Li Hung Chang, Commander the Southern Army.
Kang, a reformer
Li, head Eunuch in the Palace
Prince Tuan } Leaders of the Boxers.
Duke Lan }
Wang Fu, a provincial official
Eunuchs, boxers, soldiers, &c.

The Empress Dowager
Ta-hé, a lady in waiting
Ladies.

The action passes on the 16th-18th Aug. 1900, in the Imperial Palace, Pekin

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A Son of Heaven.

Act I.

The Throne Hall of Heavenly Purity in the Winter Palace, Pekin. The great Dragon Throne, with its elaborate carving, its steps, and its canopy, occupies the back of the stage. Pillars support the roof, a carved beams. On each side of the throne are tables with china bowls containing pyramids of oranges. A few small seats in front.

~~Li Lien-ying, chief eunuch, very old, senile and crafty, is discovered with the under-eunuchs superintending the arrangement of the room. When the curtain rises, he is engaged at the back of the stage. A sound of firing is heard outside~~

It is morning.

Li Lien-ying, the very old chief eunuch of the Palace, is discovered with the under-eunuchs superintending the arrangement of the room. When the curtain rises, he is engaged at the back of the stage. A sound of firing is heard outside.

- -

1st E. There they go again - bang, bang, bang.

2nd E. It's really very disturbing. If this sort of thing goes on much longer, I shall lose my nerve. I'm not as young as I was; and I never thought I should live to hear guns go off in the Forbidden City. Such violence! Such changes! Yesterday I was so startled by one of their explosions that I dropped a tea-cup. (more firing) You'll think Heaven't they'd finished off enough guns by this time to wipe off every foreign devil from the face of the earth.

1st E. Foreign devils are not wiped off so easily. A cousin of mine once went into one of their houses; and what do you think he saw? He saw all the foreign devils - he-devils and she-devils together - sitting round a table with knives in their hands. And they put their knives into their mouths and laughed. Their skin is not as our skin; it is white, but it is as hard as bronze. As for bullets, they bound off them like hail on a window-pane.

3rd E. Oh, abominations!

1st E. The Boxers too are bullet-proof. They will [illegible]

is mourning.

As he is saying the very old chief eunuch of the Palace, is discovered with the under-eunuchs superintending the arrangement of the room. When the curtain rises he is engaged at the back of the stage. A sound of firing is heard outside.

1st E. There they go again - bang, bang, bang.

2nd E. It's really very disturbing. If this sort of thing goes on much longer, I shall lose my nerve. I'm not a young as I was; and I never thought I should live to hear guns go off in the Forbidden City. Such violence! Such changes! Yesterday I was so startled by one of their explosions that I dropped a tea-cup. (more firing)

3rd E. You'd think they'd finish off enough guns by this time to wipe off every foreign devil from the face of the earth.

1st E. Foreign devils are not wiped off so easily. A cousin of mine once went into one of their houses; and what do you think he saw? He saw all the foreign devils - he-devils and she-devils together - sitting round a table with knives in their hands. And they put their knives into their mouths and laughed. Their skin is not as our skin; it is white, but it is as hard as bronze. As for bullets, they bound off them like hail on a window-pane.

3rd E. Oh, abominations!

1st E. The Boxers too are bullet-proof. They will prevail in the end. Each one carries a secret talisman upon him, made of a small piece of yellow paper, and on it there is painted a vermilion monster, bearing on his body the characters of Buddha, Tiger, and Dragon. And on the top left-hand corner

2nd E. All the mischief came from allowing foreign devils into the holy City. What would the Empress have said, if they had seen such a thing?

3rd E. But tell me this. Why does not the old Buddha issue a proclamation ordering all foreign devils out of the country, and forbidding them ever to return? Is she not Empress? Can she not do as she wills? Otherwise —

me written the words "Invoke first the Black Lord of Pestilence" and the top right-hand corner —

Ch. Com. "There is too much talking here. That cloth is crooked; and you haven't arranged the incense-sticks. Make haste, make haste. If her majesty were to find things out of order, you know what would happen. Now, go into the anti-chamber, and spread the carpets. Be off (Exeunt 1st & 2nd Eunuchs 3rd remains)

3rd E. But sir, tell me this. Why does not the old Buddha issue a proclamation ordering all foreign devils out of the country, and forbidding them to return? Is she not Empress? Can she not do as she wills?

Li Oh! foolish are the words of a fool, but the words of a young fool are the most foolish of all. Has not Confucius said it? What! Is it for such as you to ask questions? Have you never had a flea in your garments? And have you not let the flea stay in your garments till you thought fit to destroy it? Know then, that the foreign devils are fleas to the old Buddha. Be off.

3rd E. But —

Li Still talking? Do you want to be whipped? Away with you.
[Exit 3rd E.

(looks at paper)
Forty thousand. And forty, eighty; and six, eighty six. Eighty-six thousand Dollars. Hum. — Ah! The most respectable Wang Fu.

Enter Wang Fu, a young old mandarin

Wang Fu Where is Prince Tuan? He told me to meet him here before the Council this day?

Li Your Lordship is early. Prince Tuan has not yet come (Pause for sighing)

Wang Fu Still sighing! I am exceedingly uneasy. To-chang has committed suicide.

Li Dead? What did he leave?

Wang Fu It was a protest against — (looks round) — against — you know what against — against the Empress encouraging the Boxers to attack the foreign legations. Now it is quite true that the Western Ambassadors are sacred; Confucius says so. But then it is also true that foreign devils are — foreign devils. And besides

ever, her majesty encourage the Boxers? I don't think. Nobody knows what of she does. Why doesn't she encourage them now? Either the foreign devils must be let alone, or they must be exterminated. What's the use of firing at them with pop guns? I've only just come up from the Provinces, and there are things here I don't understand. I'm told there's European artillery in the arsenal: why if that's so, why isn't it used against the legations? If the Old Buddha really want to destroy the foreign devils, why doesn't She bombard them with the European guns?

Li There's a little difficulty. The commander-in-chief at the arsenal is Jung Lu; and Jung Lu refuses to fire.

Wang Refuses? Who is Jung Lu that he should refuse? Has he been ordered to fire?

Li Jung Lu is the commander-in-chief, as I said. He is very popular with the soldiers. Pressure has been put upon him to use his artillery, but so far he has paid no attention whatever to pressure. The Empress of course might order him to fire: but supposing he refused to obey the order? That might be distinctly awkward.

Wang Him. It was Jung Lu, wasn't it, who brought the Empress in to power five years ago, and deposed the Emperor?

Li Deposed? Oh no, I assure you. The Son of Heaven still rules. But, owing to his shattered health, he has seen fit to hand over the actual conduct of the government to his beloved Aunt, the Empress.

Wang I see. That's how you put it. The empress, now, is she really as striking a woman as people say?

Li She is certainly a remarkable woman.

Wang Is it true that she's the sort of woman who'll do anything to get her own way that she sticks at nothing?

Li What could have put that idea into your lordship's head?

Wang Well, her record has been a trifle singular, I am the least of it, hasn't it? To begin with, there was her husband, the Old Emperor. He died, and he died at a very convenient moment for her majesty.

Wang ... mean' there was a death anticipate event was perfectly regular.
Then she succeeded as Empress Dowager, and ruled in the name of her infant son
He was very ill such a fine boy, everyone said, and then two months, before he came of
age, when of course he was to succeed to the Empire, he too died. That was well
singular, wasn't it?

Li Doesn't your Lordship know that that young man wore himself to death with debauchery
and that his mother nearly died of grief in consequence?

Wang Well, at any rate she managed to go on reigning. She adopted her nephew, the present
emperor, and ruled in his name for ~~another~~ twelve years more. Isn't that so? When he came
of age, he didn't die - no - some people were quite surprised. I believe he succeeded
very good! - But then what happened? After eighteen months her Majesty appeared
upon the scene once more, and this time into young Jen and his army. The Emperor
naturally found that his health was so shattered that he was obliged to hand over
the conduct of the government to his beloved Aunt - isn't that how you put it?
~~Unfortunate~~ that was five years ago, and ~~ever~~ since then her Majesty has continued
to govern "what seems to me the record of a woman extraordinarily like to have her own way.

Li Your Lordship forgets. Her Majesty was bound to interfere. Those injudicious reforms on
the European model which the Emperor was ~~forced~~ persuaded to introduce didn't
they, most clearly enough that he - well, that he was in need of rest? Her Majesty
really couldn't help herself.

Wang I daresay I'm not complaining, I only say it's singular. Just in the meantime where
are we? In Confusion everywhere. The Boxers rising up like this - an anti-foreign
riot - quite unanthorised I do - and attacking the foreign legations. There was
Then I hear there's a European army marching on the capital.
riot all last yesterday, in my quarter. Where are they going to stop? I'm most uneasy
to what is happening. The astrologers prophecy disasters. I don't like it at all.

Li What is your balance?

Wang Eh, balance?

Li Your balance at the bank. In time. I confusion, any meanings, there is only

as they that is always useful, and that is a piece of gold. I agree with Mencius
Li'ang and my wife down with the gumyy too. By the bye, the post of Head Censor becomes
vacant by the suicide of Ko-cheng. I think my claims deserve consideration. I have
worked for forty years in the service of the State, and I have never interceded a
reform may I count on your support with her majesty?

Ch. your lordship does me too much honour. How can your lordship suppose
that I poor creature such as I can have any influence with her majesty? My
position is an ephemeral humble one. It is true that I have opportunities for seeing
her majesty, but that is all I can boast of. I have neither consideration, nor
capacity, nor wealth — in fact, so far as my pecuniary situation is concerned,
I may say it is distinctly embarrassing.

Wan I had heard something of the sort, and had taken the liberty of ordering my steward
to transmit to you a small loan — two thousand dollars.

Ch I see that your lordship is not altogether unfamiliar with the ways of the
capital. I shall see what I can do for your lordship. Just now is Prince Tuan's
right eight thousand. Hum. They are angry, and very excited.

Enter Prince Tuan, followed by, & unbeknown to [illegible]

Tuan I say it must and shall be done. Jung Lu must go. Ah! My old friend Li Ang.
I hope we may rely on you in the Council. We want every man we can get.

Li'ang certainly you may rely on me — I do anything reasonable.

Tuan Reasonable? Pooh! If it's reasons you want, you shall have plenty. You
don't doubt that I'm a reasonable man?

Prince Lan But do you understand the situation?

Li'a what I do understand I don't like. All I know is that the Boxers are
besieging the Legations, that there are riots in the city, that my wife is down
with the gumyy, and that the astrologers predict a revolution. I don't like it.

Tuan If worse comes to worst, how does? How could like to see their country overrun and
ruled in succession by foreigners? There are foreigners in this very city — in our

very midst. Who's ever such a thing heard of in the good old days? And there's an army of foreigners, landed in foreign ships, upon our shores, marching on the capital. It's the foreigners who have always been at the bottom of every disaster in China. But now the time has come to strike. The hour of vengeance is sounding. We have the chance; let us use it. Let us rid the country for ever of these pests who are preying on our vitals. The gods have sent the Boxers as a sword to slay them. It is for us to push the sword home. Let us tear out the foreign devils root and branch from among us, let us wipe their accursed legations out of existence, and then turn and drive their barbarous armies howling into the sea. Then, and then only, shall we have a free, happy, prosperous, & victorious China - the true Celestial Empire that our progenitors handed down to us, & whose good name has grown tarnished in our keeping. (murmurs of applause from members)

Wang Yes: this is all very well, but what are we to do if we can't get hold of the European guns? I understand Jung Lu has got control of them, and won't let them be used.

Duke Lan There you hit the nail on the head. Jung Lu must be got rid of at all costs.

Wang But how do you propose to manage that?

Tuan We intend to insist, at this morning's council, on Jung Lu's being given the order to fire, on pain of death. If he refuses, we'll have his head off, and fire the guns ourselves. In any case the foreign legations will be destroyed, and her majesty irrevocably pledged to an anti-foreign policy. Then the true patriotic party in China will come into power, and the country will be saved. May we count on your support?

Wang But her majesty? Aren't you reckoning without her majesty? What are her views?

Tuan Ah, heaven knows what her views are. She hates the foreign devils as much as we do, but she won't order Jung Lu to fire. She keeps on shilly-shallying. It's over [illegible] to put a stop to this nonsense We must force her hand. After all she's only a woman.

Wang Well, I think you'll get your way. But Prince Tuan? Yes, but with what a remarkable character!

Tuan Remarkable, if you like – but still a woman. And you know what that means: you yourself my lord, are a married man. It means whims, caprices, hesitations, changes. In one word it means weakness, and it is the fatal effects of weakness that we see around us at the present moment on every side. What we want is a man at the head of affairs. We all know that his majesty the Emperor is an such a condition of – h'm – of ill-health that he is unable to rule. His aunt has graciously undertaken to discharge the functions of government. But what is to prevent the Emperor resigning – owing to his ill-health? What is to prevent her majesty adopting another and a more suitable member of the imperial family as his successor? ~~Would be objected~~ I myself am a member of the imperial family. ~~[illegible]~~. In that case, the influence of a man would be felt in the policy of the government, and I can promise you that after that there would be no more rioting in the city.

Wang And you actually intend to propose this at today's Council?

Tuan Not yet, not yet. For the present I shall content myself with insisting upon the immediate destruction of the legations.

Li Wang Your highness's schemes are far-reaching. I'm really not quite sure whether I altogether follow them. But there's one thing I can't help doubting, from all I hear. I can't help doubting whether you'll find it quite so easy as you say to put round the Old Buddha.

Enter a Manchu

Manchu Have you heard the news? The Boxers have set fire to the foreign devils' cathedral, & the whole place is blazing.

Tuan Ah! I was sure this was going to be a lucky day.

Manchu If we don't punish the job now, we never shall.

Enter 2nd Manchu

2nd M. Am I late? I was kept waiting by the crowd outside the palace. I couldn't get through for some time. At last I found out what it was. They'd got a foreign devil there – caught him in the streets. They'd put him in a cage, and there they

were, prodding at him, while he was begging for mercy and yelling like a maniac. I never saw anything so funny in my life.

Tuan I hope you told them to hack off his head.

Lau Oh, that's too good for him. I should have him flogged to death.

Li I know something better than that. I should first take him and (whispers) and then I should – (whispers) – and then – (whispers). [While he whispers, the Mandarin (He is a middle-aged man, tall, handsome, with an inscrutable Mongolian face) laughs. As they are laughing, Jung Lu enters unnoticed by them. [He sits down on the other side of the stage, leans back, & shuts his eyes.]

2nd Mandarin Yes, but wait a moment: I haven't finished my story. In a little while who should come up but Jung Lu; and what do you think he did? He ordered everyone off, had the man taken out of the cage, and sent him away under an escort of his own guards to the arsenal.

Tuan Jung Lu is a traitor.

Wang Oh, surely that's going rather far. After all, Jung Lu

Li Don't you see, my lord? — He's here.

Wang What do you say?

Tuan etc Jung Lu!

Wang Oh, to be sure, so he is. (going towards him) Jung Lu, we were just (correcting) speaking of you. That foreigner that was captured, is it true that you ....
I think he's asleep.. Oh, you asleep, Jung Lu?

Tuan (pushing Wang with his hand) Asleep is he? I'll soon wake him. Jung Lu! Jung Lu! What are you doing

~~you bring~~ with the European guns? What possible excuse can you have for not turning them on to the Legations? Come, come; answer my question. (Jung-hu gives a faint snore) Oh, this is mere tomfoolery. (Shakes him) Answer my question, I say.

Jung You have disturbed me. I was dreaming. A most beautiful dream...

Juan Dreaming? Dreaming? This is no time for dreaming. Answer my question.

Jung I am still sleepy. If you go on talking, I expect I shall go off again. Your voice ~~was a lullaby~~ has such a lulling effect, you see.

Juan Oh, this is monstrous -

Jung I ~~dreamt~~ was dreaming that I was a butterfly — a white butterfly in a large garden full of flowers. The sun was shining, and the sky was a brilliant blue; and while I was fluttering from flower to flower I ~~was~~ suddenly saw another white butterfly; and just as I knew that I myself was one butterfly, so I knew that the other butterfly was — ... a certain young lady. And I flew after the other butterfly, and she flew away from me; but at last I came up with her, and circled round her, and she circled round me. And as we circled round each other we rose higher into the air; and we circled quicker & quicker and closer & closer, and ~~we~~ rose higher & higher, until at last the garden we had left far far below us, and we were by ourselves in the brilliant sky. And still we circled quicker & closer, and quicker & closer, until at last —

Juan Answer my question.

Jung Do you insist, your highness, I think you forget your manners. But, if ... insist, I will answer your question. You shall have the European ... on one condition; and that is that you can persuade the Old Buddha to give you my head ~~as well~~ at the same time.

Enter eunuchs, waiting-women, etc. Cries of "Her Majesty! Her majesty! Way for Her Majesty!" & then enter the Empress Dowager and her train. Everyone kneels. The Empress is a very well-preserved woman of

Empress Where is the Son of Heaven?

Li He is here, your majesty.

Enter the Emperor, alone. [He is a young man of about 28. He walks as if entranced in a dull despair. His features, refined and distinguished, are set in a rigid expressionless blank. He is very pale and obviously ill – perhaps dying. The suffering that is plainly written upon every part of him – his ashy face, his thin unmoving hands, his frail body – seems to be of the kind that has passed beyond the acuteness of conscious pain into a dreary monotony of torpor. He walks to the throne. When he appears, the Empress looks him up and down in cold silence, and then speaks.]

Empress. You have kept us waiting. We are displeased. [The Emperor kowtows in silence, and then follows the Empress on to the Throne. They take their places side by side – the Empress in the centre, and on a higher seat. The rest of the scene the Emperor remains absolutely impassive and immovable, staring in front of him, and seeing nothing. The women go behind a screen to the left of the throne. The Eunuchs stand beside the throne. As they pass by the kneeling mandarins, Jung Lu pulls the sleeve of one of the prettiest, who turns round, frowns, and passes on. The Eunuchs stand beside the throne. The mandarins remain kneeling. Throughout the rest of the scene, the Emperor remains absolutely impassive and immovable, staring in front of him with fixed eyes which clearly see nothing. The Empress addresses the assembly in decisive tones.] My lords, I have good news for you. The enemies of our country

are beginning to feel the wrath of the gods. Their navy has been annihilated (murmurs of applause). Even their flagship has been sunk to the bottom of the sea (applause) The destruction of their army, which they have had the insolence to send upon our territory and to advance towards our capital, is now inevitable at hand. It is already completely surrounded by our valiant troops under the leadership of our trusted general, Li Hung Chang, and I am expecting hourly to hear from Li Hung Chang the announcement of its final extermination (Applause) My lords, I have called you together to urge you to [illegible] ask for your advice

with [illegible] the Emperor remains absolutely impassive and immovable, staring in front of him and seeing nothing. The women go behind a screen to the left of the throne. The eunuchs stand beside the throne as they pass by the kneeling mandarins. Jung Lu pulls the sleeve of one of the prettiest, who turns round, frowns, and passes on. The eunuchs stand beside the throne. The mandarins remain kneeling. Throughout the rest of the scene, the Emperor remains absolutely impassive and immovable, staring in front of him with fixed eyes which clearly see nothing. [illegible] The Empress addresses the assembly in decisive tones.] My lords, I have good news for you. The enemies of our country

—

are beginning to feel the wrath of the gods. Their navy has been annihilated (murmurs of applause). Every foreign ship has been sunk to the bottom of the sea. (applause) The destruction of their army, which they have had the insolence to land upon our territory and to advance towards our capital, is now inevitably at hand. It is already completely surrounded by our valiant troops, under the leadership of our trusted general, Li Hung Chang, and I am expecting hourly to hear from Li Hung Chang the announcement of its final extermination. (Applause) My lords, I have called you together to urge you to do all that it is in your power your utmost in the defence of our country and to ask for your advice as to the best means of ensuring the ruin of our enemies. You I need hardly say that I am speaking with the full approval of his majesty the Emperor. Is not that so, your majesty? (The Emperor's lips are seen to move). You hear, my lords, the gracious words which his majesty deigns to let fall. Everything that I have said meets with the concurrence of the Son of Heaven. I flatter myself that I may depend upon his majesty's invariable support. My lords, I am anxious for your counsel. Your majesty, I propose that a price be set upon the head of every foreigner in Pekin. Let 50 taels be offered for the head of every male barbarian brought to the palace, 40 for that of a woman, and 30 for that of a child.

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Empress I approve of the suggestion. What does your majesty think? - The Son of Heaven assents. Let a proclamation be issued accordingly.

Li Ang Your Majesty, if such are your majesty's views, should not an edict be despatched to the provinces ordering the extermination of all foreigners throughout China?

Empress Good, very good. Your Majesty - ? - The Son of Heaven assents. Let the necessary edicts be prepared.

Tuan I humbly crave the indulgence of your majesty. If the government has indeed decided to extirpate the foreigners, may I point out that a large body of foreigners still remains in ~~the Forbidden~~ our very midst? The foreign legations are still unharmed. A gallant body of volunteers are doing what they can to carry out the wishes of your majesty, but they are unsupported by your majesty's troops. Is your majesty aware that there are European guns at the arsenal? And that those guns are silent? I suppose that orders be immediately issued that the whole of the artillery at the arsenal should be turned upon the foreign legations. (murmurs of applause)

Empress Jung Lu is in command at the arsenal. What has Jung Lu to say to this?

Jung Lu Nothing, your majesty.

Empress Nothing?

Jung Lu Nothing.

Empress You have heard what Prince Tuan has said. Why is it that you are not putting the European artillery to better use?

Jung Lu Does your majesty order me to that?

Empress Ah, Jung Lu, Jung Lu, answer me this. If I gave the order would you carry it out?

Jung Lu Your majesty has but to give the order. Is it for me to anticipate?

Tuan He is a traitor, your majesty

Manchus a traitor! a traitor!

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Jung Lu. Your majesty allow my enemies to call me traitor before my face? May I observe that if your majesty thinks as they do there is an easy remedy. My life is in your majesty's hands.

Empress That is enough. We require your presence no longer. Leave us. (Exit Jung Lu)

Juan Will not your majesty immediately arrest him?

Duke Lan Let him be executed forthwith.

Manchus He is a traitor! Let him be executed! Let the foreign devils be destroyed! (There is a hubbub, which subsides when the Empress angrily rises.)

Empress Silence! Have you no respect for the throne? We dissolve the Council.

(All Manchus except Juan & Lan. Empress comes down from throne. Emperor remains on throne)

Prince Juan! Duke Lan! Come here. I have something to say to you. Your conduct has been unruly of late. Your demeanour has been disrespectful. Just now, you actually dared, you & your friends, to utter jubilation before the Son of Heaven. What I hear of you I do not like. I am told that you keep low company. Is that true case? Do not answer. I do not wish to hear you speak. I am also told that you venture to indulge in schemes, that you have views upon the government of the Empire. Your highness, it is quite true that I am a woman. Well, understand this. Try my temper a little further, and you'll find out what a woman can do. Now go. (Exeunt Juan & Lan) Ladies & eunuchs come forward. Give me my fan. I shall walk in the garden. Wait a moment. Li, is there any news of Li Hung Chang?

Li There is no news of Li Hung Chang, your majesty.

Empress No news? What can that mean? I am growing impatient. Have one faithful servant in the Empire, and he is Li Hung Chang; and Li Hung Chang is silent. Is it true that a foreign devil has been caught by the Boxers?

Li It is true; but he was pleased in a cage; but Jung Lu ordered his release, and sent him to the arsenal

Empress (rising) My lords! My lords! You forget yourselves. Have you no respect for the Throne? She dissolves the Council [All the members go out, except Juan & Lan. The Empress comes down from the throne; Duke Lan walks up from behind the talking rapidly. While the members are going out the Emperor remains on the throne - still absolutely rigid.] Prince Juan! Duke Lan! Come here. I have something to say to you - Wait a moment - Li. prepare some baskets of fruit and flowers some of the best from my own garden - pack them up, and have them despatched from me to the ladies in the foreign legations - to Mrs Conger and the rest of the ladies - do you understand? - And do you understand, my lords? Your conduct has been unruly of late. Your demeanour has been disrespectful. Just now, you actually dared, you and your friends, to utter ejaculations before the Son of Heaven, and before me. What I hear of you I do not like. I am told that you keep low company. Is that the case? Do not answer. I do not wish to hear you speak. I am even told that you venture to indulge in schemes, that you have views upon the government of the Empire. Your highness, it is true that I am a woman. Well, understand this. Try my temper a little further, and you'll find out what a woman can do. There go. [Juan & Lan bow low & exeunt. Ladies and eunuchs come forward.] Give me my fan. I shall walk in the garden. No, stop. Li, I want to speak to you. Come here (She draws him on one side) Is there any news of Li Hung Chang?

Li There is no news of Li Hung Chang, your Majesty.

Empress No news! No news! What can this mean? I am growing impatient. I have no faithful servant in the Empire, and he is Li Hung Chang; and Li Hung Chang is silent - Is it true that a foreign devil has been caught (the Pope)?

Li It is true. He was placed in a cage, but Jung Lu rescued him immediately and sent him to the arsenal.

Emp. What insolence! How dared he do that! He goes about as the acknowledged protector of these barbarians who are bringing confusion and ruin to the Empire. I would like to put all the foreign devils there are into a mortar, and pound

them to death with my own hands. - Where is my looking-glass? This pin doesn't suit my dress at all. Bring me some others. - Is it true that the Boxers carry about a secret talisman which prevents the barbarians' bullets from ever hitting them?

Li It is quite true, your majesty.

Emp. Send five hundred taels to the men who captured the foreign devil, and thank them from me personally. Oh! And don't forget the fruit and flowers for the ladies. - Ah! If I could only behead Jung Lu!

Li Can your majesty hesitate for a moment?

Emp. Yes, this is a prettier pin, this jade dragon-fly. My looking-glass again; and now a little powder. - Jung Lu is a traitor: I know that as well as you do. He deserves every sort of death. But don't you know your Confucius? "It is easy to command," says Confucius; "it is not so easy to be obeyed." Suppose I command the execution of Jung Lu. What would happen? I ask you, what would happen? He is the master of the arsenal; he has the European guns; he is the commander-in-chief of the troops in the city; the army is devoted to him. I can't think why, but it is. Oh! I've made inquiries. It's not he who would find it difficult to be obeyed. So don't you see I must be careful? Do you want bombshells bursting in your bedroom? No, I'm going on another tack. - A handkerchief, please. - My intention is — this handkerchief is yellow! Who gave me this handkerchief? [One of the ladies-in-waiting is punished by the others. The Empress turns up her fingers.] If you dare to give me a yellow handkerchief? How many times have I issued orders — ? Then I to have no attention at all? You stupid ugly little thing, leave my presence. Double her month's salary. - My intention is to try the method of persuasion. If he won't do what he's told, perhaps he'll do what he's asked. Tell him to come and see me in the garden. I shall try the effect of a little coldness. I shall give him a supper-party. Jung Lu was always fond of supper parties. Five years ago he wouldn't have dreamt of behaving like this. He was devoted enough then. Oh! Five years ago - five years ago! What has changed? What high jinks we used to have then!

I

Li become me!

Emp Why has he changed so? Yes, we had fine times in those days. Didn't we? Do you remember the masked ball we had once, when all the men were dressed as women, and all the women were dressed as men? Oh, I shall never forget it as long as I live. But what has come over Jung Lu?

Li I have some reason to believe, your majesty, that his affections have become engaged.

Emp. His affections engaged! I don't believe it. At any rate, if that's so he must disengage them. Don't you think I can't do that? Have I changed so in five years? Am I growing old? You dare to suggest that I'm growing old?

Li Oh! Your majesty! What a suspicion!

Emp. Ladies, come here! How old am I, ladies? Your honest opinion! If you saw me now for the first time. Lady Ling, how old should you say I was?

Lady Your majesty would always appear to me the youngest lady in the room

Emp. Flattery! Flattery! I know your flattery. Forty-five, I daresay; would you say I was forty-five? Or forty? Forty, perhaps? Or thirty-five? Or thirty? Thirty-three - let's say thirty-three. Well, surely a woman can captivate a man if she wants to, at the age of thirty-three. Tell Jung Lu to come and talk to me. What else is there for me to do? Am I to hand myself over int Prince Tuan's charge? Is that what you want? Pooh! Do you think I can't see to the bottom of that bragging, blundering, overbearing donkey? I see what he wants, and I see how thinks he'll get it. He wants to have the run of everything. He's got a child. Now he wants to have him made Emperor - I've heard all about it - a farcical notion. And he thinks I'm going down on my knees to him, to get him to save me from Jung Lu. Isn't that his game? Just tell me, isn't that his game? But he's mistaken. If anyone's going to save me from Jung Lu, it's not Prince Tuan; it's Li Hung Chang. Oh, Li Hung Chang. Li Hung Chang! Why are you silent? - Send off a telegram to Li Hung Chang, commanding his immediate presence in Pekin.

Li What, your majesty! Li Hung Chang is at the head of the Southern Army & you want him to leave his post, to come away in the face of the enemy —?

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anyone's going to save me from Jung Lu. it's not Prince Tuan; it's Li Hung Chang. Oh, Li Hung Chang, Li Hung Chang! Why are you silent? - Send off a telegram to Li Hung Chang, commanding his immediate presence in Pekin.

Li What, your Majesty! Li Hung Chang is at the head of the southern army; do you want him to leave his post, to come away in the face of the enemy —?

Empress Obey my orders! Send him a telegram this moment. Tell him to defeat the barbarians. Tell him to do it in my name. But tell him, whether he defeats them or not, to return to Pekin. I will have him here, I say.

Li Your majesty's orders are difficult; but I will do my best. By the bye, has your majesty looked in the book of lucky days to find out whether today is a good day for sending telegrams?

Empress No. Look in the book. What does it say?

Li Above all, telegrams should never be sent off on the fourth day of the month. Today is the fourth day of the month, your majesty.

Empress Oh, indeed, is it? Who compiled that book?

Li The astrologers, your majesty.

Empress Give it to me. The astrologers are mistaken. This is how I treat astrologers when they are mistaken. (Tears up book) Is Prince Tuan an astrologer? Send off the telegram to Li Hung Chang, on pain of death. Order prayers to be offered up in every temple in the City for the success of the army. Order the astrologers to foretell a complete victory at the earliest possible date. How much does Prince Tuan pay the astrologers?

overbearing donkey? I see what he wants, and I see how he thinks he'll get it. He thinks I'll go down on my knees to him and ask him to save me from Jung-lu. Isn't that his game? I ask you, isn't that his game? But he's mistaken. If Possibly Prince Juan is more disinterested than your majesty supposes.

Disinterested? Ha, ha, ha! Who taught you that word? Disinterested! Just listen. Here's Li talking about being disinterested. He's getting on. How many thousand dollars has Prince Juan put into your money-bags, you wicked old thing?

Money-bags? - Dollars? - your majesty - -

Oh, don't be ridiculous. If you go on looking innocent like that much longer you'll burst. Innocence doesn't suit one of your age + experience. It's simpler to be guilty straight out. Aren't we all guilty? You're guilty, and Juan's guilty, and I'm guilty - oh, of most awful sins. You'd do anything to get your money-bags filled; Juan would do anything to be an emperor; and I'd do anything - what would I do anything for? - oh, good heavens, I'd do anything to be able to sit in peace under an almond tree, and eat sweets and read poetry and admire the view. Come along into the garden. That donkey Juan thinks he's going to have himself made emperor. That's the price he thinks he'll get for stamping on Jung-lu. But the poor man won't get it. If I must have a dummy, I prefer to have my own dummy, that one up there, you know (the miracle the Emperor) that does very well for me. - Let's have a play tonight. - They think they'll pinch me between them, because I'm a woman. A woman! A woman! Am I woman? I say, am I woman? Whoever dares to say I'm a woman, I'll have them cut in pieces. I'm a man, a man, a man. Can't you see that I'm a man? Tell me that I'm a man!

If you don't tell me that I'm a man -

Certainly, certainly, you are a man, your majesty.

Quite right, you silly old idiot. Well, if I am, it's more than you are. The garden, the garden! We'll have tea by the lotus-lake. I am a man. (He chases the Emperor, he comes down from the throne and

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bowtows. They all go out, leaving him alone. He rises. Directly he finds that he is alone a complete change takes place in him. His apathy gives place to an extreme nervous sensibility, and during the following scene he is in a state of almost hysterical agitation, physical exhaustion, and a kind of ~~wild~~ eager neuropathic happiness.]

Emperor. Alone! At last! Alone! Ah, a little breathing space! But am I? - (he looks round the room) Oh, my head. What shall I do? Where is she? Why doesn't she come? Ja-hé! (He calls out, waits, and then shrinks back, terrified) Can it be that she's -? -Ja-hé! Ja-hé! - Oh no, she's not, she can't be - (As he is muttering, Ja-hé enters. She is the pretty girl, whose sleeve Jung Lu pulled, before the Council. Her prettiness, indeed, would amount to beauty, were it not that her expression & lacks all trace of intellectual power. Simplicity and good-nature are her obvious characteristics. She treats the Emperor with a mixture of affection, authority, and submissiveness, such as a devoted nursery-maid might show towards a sick child whom she knows to be cleverer than herself. She comes in running and laughing, and throws a flower at the Emperor. He turns and sees her, then goes towards her, almost breathless.) Oh! You're here! Where have you been? Didn't you hear me calling? Why didn't you come sooner? You're teasing me, teasing me.

~~I had to run back from the garden~~

Yes, I'm foolish I am. Of course you had to. ~~[illegible]~~ But you don't know what I feel. My head's very bad. I'm afraid this is one of my bad days.

Come & sit down here.

Yes, that's better. ~~If~~ You don't know what I feel. I get so frightened. How can I help it? When all those people were here, when that woman's talking. Then they're all moving about and laughing and crying - as if I didn't exist - oh then, I ~~want to abolish that~~ feel as if the air were full of daggers, and as if the walls were coming together to crush me, and I want to cry out, and abolish everything, and find myself in a vast desert, with nothing near me for hundreds of miles - only to be alone calm, alone. And then, when they're gone, when at last they're left me, and I am alone - You know what I feel then? I feel as if I'd give the whole world to have someone near me, without the delay of a single second. I feel like a ghost in a vault; and then I call for you; and you don't come; and I imagine that something has happened to you - that you have had - that something has appeared to you, and that I am lost.

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- that I shall never see you again.

-Ja-hé! Ja-hé! Oh no, she's not, she can't be — she is smaller, as he enters we see the pretty girl, whose sleeve may be pulled before the moment. Her prettiness would amount to beauty were it not that her expression betrays a lack of intellectual power. Simplicity and good-nature are her obvious characteristics. She treats the emperor with a mixture of affection, authority, and unconsciousness, such as a devoted nursery maid might show towards a sick child whom she knows to be more than herself. She comes in running and laughing, and throws a flower at the emperor. He turns and sees her, then goes towards her, almost breathless.)

Oh! You're here! Where have you been? Didn't you hear me calling? Why didn't you come sooner? You're teasing me, teasing me.

I had to run back from the garden—

Ja-hé Yes! How foolish I am. Of course you had to. ~~But you don't know what I feel.~~ But you don't know what I feel. ~~How~~ My head's very heavy. I'm afraid this is one of my bad days.

Come & sit down here.

Ja-hé Yes, that's better. ~~You don't know what I feel, I get so frightened.~~ How can I help it? When all those people were here, when that woman's talking. When they're all moving about and laughing and going on as if I didn't exist — oh then, I ~~want to abolish the~~ feel as if the air were full of daggers, and as if the walls were coming together to crush me, and I want to cry out, and abolish everything, and find myself in a vast desert, with nothing near me for hundreds of miles — only to be alone, alone. And then, when they've gone, when at last they've left me, and I am alone — do you know what I feel then? I feel as if I'd give the whole world to have someone near me, without the delay of a single second. I feel like a ghost in a vault; and then I call for you; and you don't come; and I imagine that something has happened — that you have had an accident — that something has happened to you, and that I am lost, utterly lost, and that I shall never see you again.

Ja-hé But you see I do come. Here I am. You mustn't think of such dreadful things.

Not think? No; if I could only not think — (coughs)

Your cough isn't well yet. Try one of these lozenges; I'm sure it will do you good. I stopped them from the emperor's table last night. It was such fun. She was on to me; because she thought she'd catch the cunuchs stealing her sweets also, — found out that they do it; and so she was keeping her eye on them all the time, I managed to put out my hand and get the lozenges. I thought I should explode

Ja-hé. Put your head a little cushion. I should have come sooner, but such a funny thing happened. As I was coming through the garden, a man met me; I thought he was a gardener at first, but somehow he didn't quite look like a gardener. And he came up to me with a bunch of flowers, and asked me to give them to [illegible] I said I would; and he asked me to pronounce a word [illegible] pronounce, and here they are. [illegible] Perhaps it was a new gardener. I'm so selfish and impatient. But you don't know what I feel. Ja-hé. I feel frightened

with laughter: but supposing she'd seen me!

Emp. Oh, how kind you are. How happy I am! Kiss me, kiss me, dearest creature. Don't leave me. Promise me never to leave me, never, never, as long as I live.

Ta-hé How could I leave my lord?

Emp. Do you remember when I first met you? Do you remember? When was it? I believe it was more than a year ago.

Ta-hé You mean when you first spoke to me. As if I hadn't known you before that! It was you who never looked at me.

Emp. It was in the Spring. The cherry blossom was out. And do you remember where it was?

Ta-hé Yes, I remember where it was.

Emp. You were sitting by the well in the old Courtyard. You were looking into the water – straight down. What were you thinking of? You've never told me. And I came up behind you, and looked over your shoulder, and our eyes met in the water. And then you jumped up —

Ta-hé Yes, and nearly fell in, too. To find that it was his majesty —

Emp. and then we began to talk. What a lucky chance it was! There was nobody watching. But you would laugh so loud that I was afraid every minute that somebody would hear us. How do you manage to laugh so much, Ta-hé?

Ta-hé I can't imagine. I can't help it. When this morning I very nearly found myself in bursting out laughing in the middle of the council.

Emp. Why? What was that?

Ta-hé It was because I [illegible]

Emp. Jung du?

Ta-hé Yes. He's so ridiculous. He will keep on making eyes at me when he sees me, and this morning, as I was passing coming in after the old Buddha, just as I passed him he pulled my sleeve, and when I looked round, he winked. It was too silly ~~in the middle~~ of everything. I can't think how I kept a serious face.

Emp. Jung du is a wicked man. Have nothing to do with Jung du.

Ta-hé Oh! But he ~~is so good looking~~ has such a nice nose.

Emp. It was ~~all~~ because of Jung du that all my misfortunes came upon me; because of his wickedness, his treachery –

Ta-hé Well, that's the first time I've heard you agree with the Old Buddha. She's always saying that Jung du's a traitor, and now you say so! So I suppose he must be.

Emp. Yes, a traitor both ways. It was he – five years ago – it was he who ruined me. Don't you remember?

Ta-hé That was before I came to court.

Emp. But how often I've told you! You forget things so easily.

Ta-hé I can't think why it is. I seem to have no memory at all – except for dresses. I believe I can remember every dress that I ever put on in my life.

Emp. Five years ago – when I was the Emperor – ! Oh, you should have been here then! That was the time, that was the time, Ta-hé! When the old Buddha was out of the way at the Summer Palace, and I was ruling, ruling the Empire, with the help and Kang was helping me, and every week a new edict came out, and abuses were being swept away, and progress was ~~coming~~ and civilisation was beginning to flow into China ~~and~~ gloriously, and the people were beginning to be happy – the people, Ta-hé! – the people all over the Empire from north to south being

my government, and getting ready for the wondrous day when they should be free and strong and rich and wise like the great peoples of the West – ! Oh what a time that was! Why weren't you with me then?

Ta-hé My dear lord, my dear lord, why wasn't I? How happy we should have been!

Emp. But I had Kang with me then – my own, good, faithful, devoted Kang. He helped me in everything; he drew up the edicts; he made me understand what a great nation really was; and then – oh!

Ta-hé And then? ~~What happened then?~~

Emp. Then, when we were going to put the last touch on all our reforms, when we were just on the point of establishing a new constitution, when we had skilled to make everything ripe to shutting up the old Buddha in her Summer palace for ever – then – then – my Jen betrayed us. He went to the old Buddha and told her what we were doing, and she came down like a storm with Jen Lu's troops, and swept all the plans to the winds, and ruined us all utterly and entirely. That was the horrible day of my life. I wish I had died then. ~~Ah!~~ There was only one thing I could do, and that was that I saved Kang. I made him [illegible]

[illegible] to death – the old friend. But [illegible]

[illegible] helpless a

uncle) –) – I am here . as you see me . a pretty picture of an Empress
~~Empress~~ All that I lived for ~~[illegible]~~ ; I have had to watch
the daily . the hourly triumph of ~~all that~~ I hate and despise
most in the world . Can you imagine what that can be like ? –
to be a prisoner in your own palace . a puppet on your
own throne . the laughing stock of your own Eunuchs – to be
disgraced . humiliated . helpless . to be forced to crouch down
before the infamy that has destroyed you . to lick the dust . to
kow tow – to kow tow . whenever that appalling woman goes out
in a room ? O How can I bear it ? How can I bear it ?)(

[illegible] — [illegible] — [illegible] — [

18.

that wicked old woman were to find out one day that [illegible] there was a limit even to her good fortune. If there was another revolution. If I came back into my power — oh, that's the hope that keeps me alive. How I need to have it? I can't help it. I am waiting for that hour — the hour of revenge. Ta-hé's — mine! I shall crush her as she has crushed me, when I shall force her down at my feet, and she shall find that it's she who's helpless,

- she who must accept ~~her~~ my mercy, she who is ruined after all!
Ah! is it possible! Do you think it's possible? The European army is
coming; the legations are looking out. Who knows? Who knows? If
the foreigners arrive in Pekin -? they call them foreign devils.
I call them foreign gods. They might save me. I believe they
might ~~save me~~ oh no, no, no, it's all ridiculous, all impossible, all
dream, all the idlest fantasy of my miserable brain.

Ta-hé How can you ~~please~~ like the foreigners? It's very wicked. All foreigners
are very wicked. And I ~~know~~ can prove it too; they're not men at
all. Do you know why? ~~Because they have tails~~ They are devils.
They've got tails.

Imp. Oh Ta-hé ~~have you~~ forgotten ~~your lessons~~ all my lessons? How
often I've ~~taught~~ told you that you must not believe such
nonsense as that. Don't you remember? Now answer me. What
was the name I taught you to give to all those silly stories?

Ta-ré superstition, your Majesty.

Imp Yes; and what is superstition?

Ta-ré It is an unfounded - an unfounded - an unfounded belief
- Oh! I'm sure I can't remember -

Imp No, you can't remember. ~~Although I observed you were~~ Even you
are ~~even~~ naughty child. And you called me your Majesty. You
know that's forbidden. Why is it forbidden?

Ta-ré ~~Because~~ I think it's because - because all men are equal. But all the
same you know you are your Majesty. And now you're angry
with me. Oh dear!

Imp Come and kiss me then, and make it up. I have never been
angry with you in my life. Don't you know that? kiss me, kiss

me, kiss me (kisses. more. more. let me forget. again, again, again, oh, no.
how I love you! how — but you — what is the matter? — why
can't it be? — If you don't care for me then? you hate me? — Oh you

Ja-he How cruel you are! How cruel you are! You know I love you
more than my life.

imp (kisses) (kisses) (kisses)

what was he like the man who gave them you? How can I wait till
the afternoon? What am I to do? I have such a pain in my head.

Ta-hé Hush! There's someone coming
Kang It's the Old Buddha She sent me in the name Kang!

exit Ta-hé The Empress smiles on a eunuch at back of stage

enter empress & li
Empress Come in here. I want to speak to you.
Li Have you sent for Li Hung Chang?
Empress The telegrams are just starting. Our Majesty. But, if
war we so hold. if the foreign devils are in any case driven
to destruction, why this agitation? upon
what we what I wanted to say to you. So far as I
Empress know, the foreign devils are not driven to destruction. Their
fleet has not been destroyed. As for their army - heaven knows
where they are now, may not be at the present moment.
Nothing nothing at all, is it? Why don't you laugh?
I know nothing. Nothing, is it?
What I saw at the Council was the repetition of the
great rumours. One must cheer people up you know, if needed
Empress don't you cheer me up? I thought it the proper thing
Do you know what it is? if the worst comes to the worst, I shall
be surprised if one of these fine days we have to clear out.
clear out, your majesty!
Empress Recede, I mean! We're still not caught. What's your
name, rumour? If I were you, I should get together any
valuable knick-knacks you may value, in case a sudden
departure becomes necessary. You wouldn't like to have
your pig tail twisted off by a foreign devil, would you?

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Come in here. I want to speak to you. Have you sent for Li Hung Chang?

The telegrams are just starting, your Majesty. But, if I may be so bold, your Majesty announced at the Council that the foreign devils' fleet was destroyed and their army doomed to destruction: in that case why is your Majesty so anxious for news of Li Hung Chang?

That was just what I wanted to explain to you. So far as I know the foreign devils are not doomed to destruction. Their fleet has not been destroyed. As for their army — heaven knows where their army may be at the present moment. I know nothing, nothing, nothing at all. Funny isn't it? Why don't you laugh? What I said at the Council was a repetition of the silliest rumours. One must cheer people up, you know. Why don't you cheer me up? I shouldn't be surprised if I needed it before long. Do you know what Li? You must be prepared. If the worst comes to the worst, if the foreign devils defeat Li Hung Chang, and arrive here with their army — do you know what we shall have to do then? We shall have to clear out.

Clear out, your Majesty?

Precisely, decamp! You're still not laughing. Where's your sense of humour? If I were you, I should get together any little knick knacks you may value, in case of a sudden departure becoming necessary. You wouldn't like to have your pigtail hacked off by a foreign devil, would you? And your head lopped off after that?

In the service of your Majesty —

Ah. Some humour at last. Oh! Now there's another thing. It's most important that unauthorised persons should not [redacted] to the palace after nightfall. One never knows what mayn't happen nowadays. Give strict orders to [redacted] admit no one without the password. I'll let you know the password for tonight later on. And if messengers to Li Hung Chang. I distrust your telegrams in case of a set-back, the news is to be passed along [redacted] until it will. The last foreign flower up the river to be in the temple the Ten Thousand Buddhas

is to be tolled there are look-out men on the pinnacles. Then we shall know. Ha! What is that noise?

Only the pony, your majesty. (She looks at some papers.)

Oh, is that all? Well, now I must go through these petitions. I see the post of head Census is vacant. The dear man has committed suicide. Have you a candidate?

There is Wang Fu, your majesty. They say he has been forty years in the service of the state and has never introduced a reform.

Really? That sounds suitable. How much did he give you to tell me that?

(She rises to go, and the audience see the Emperor) follows me. — Oh! Your majesty! I hadn't seen you. Still enjoying your well-earned rest? [The Emperor hastens as she goes out. And remains, hot-tempered, as the curtain falls.]

Act II.

(IV D)

The Garden of the Palace. The scene is very beautiful with trees, lakes, ruins, and magnificent buildings in the background. It is bathed in the rich warm light of afternoon. On the left some steps rise up to a curiously shaped pavilion, the floor of marble. On the right there is a low wall and an open gate through which a path leads out into another part of the garden. In the foreground the empress, surrounded by her women & eunuchs, is sitting at work on a little scene in water-colours. One of the ladies is reading poetry aloud.

Lady (reads) Man reaches scarce a hundred, yet his tears
Would fill a lifetime of a thousand years.
When days are short and night's long hours move slow,
When not with lamp in search of pleasures go? (Firing heard)
This day alone gives sure enjoyment – this!
Why then await tomorrow's doubtful bliss?

Empress Why indeed? That is excellent.
This day alone gives sure enjoyment – this!
Why then await tomorrow's doubtful bliss? (Firing)
Oh! That perpetual noise! I can hardly hear myself speak. It's really most inconsiderate. How am I to paint, I should like to know, with a noise like that going on? Just tell them to stop till I've finished my picture. Let's have a little peace and quiet for once. Now Li, what do you think of it? Remember it's not finished.

Li An unfinished picture by your majesty.

Emp Yes, yes – It is as good as a finished picture by any other artist. Your compliments are tedious. I know them all by heart. Can't you think of something new? I'd rather have a little rest above than all this stale flattery. Ladies, what do you say?

Ladies Oh your majesty! Charming! Admirable! Perfection!

Emp What a set of parrots! Do you think I believe you? Lady Fu, have you nothing to say? Why are you silent?

Lad. Fu I was thinking, your majesty.

Emp. Thinking! What were you thinking?

Lady Fu I was thinking whether the tones of the sky harmonised –

emp. What! the tones of the sky! What's wrong with the tones of the sky? What do you know about painting? Who taught you to paint? You dare to come here and lecture me on painting? Me, me! Have you forgotten who I am? Ignorance and impertinence! I've a good mind to banish you from the court.

Lady Ju Forgive me, your majesty. I was only obeying your majesty's instructions.

emp. Oh, I see. You were being candid, were you? Very well then, I shall be candid with you. Let me tell you that you're a disagreeable, stupid, ill bred young woman, and that you squint. Come here, Lady Lei. You have been to England. Tell me, does Queen Victoria paint?

Lady Lei — She paints. But her painting is as much like your majesty's as the screech of an owl is like the song of a nightingale.

emp. I should think so, indeed. What could one expect of a female barbarian? But I'm told she is rich and powerful. How many eunuchs does she keep?

I have five thousand.

[illegible] you mad!

Emp. What! no muscles! A queen without muscles! That's a good joke. You'll be telling me next that she has no executioners. But it's time for tea. go into the pavilion, and get it ready. [Exeunt ladies.] Li, stay here a moment. Have you sent for Jeng Lu?

Li Jeng Lu will be here immediately your majesty.

Emp. Good. And what is the report of the Emperor?

Li The same as usual, your majesty.

Emp As much as ever with that you, person?

Li The Son of Heaven seems to find as much pleasure as ever in the company of Ta-Ki.

Emp That's right. The stupid little minx! What on earth can he see in her? I should like to wring her silly little neck.

Li Your majesty has only to give orders

Emp. Oh thankyou. Not just yet. I find her exceedingly useful. If she weren't there, heaven knows what might'n't happen. He might try and escape. He might fling himself on the mercy of the foreign devils. That would never do. As it is, she keeps him quiet; she ties him by the leg. And the funny thing is that they think I know nothing about it. Now leave me. How quiet it is, now that the tinkling piping's stopped! But there's another sound I'm waiting for — the tolling of the bell in the temple of the Ten Thousand Buddhas. [Exit Li into the Pavilion. Enter Jeng Lu.] Ah! Jeng Lu!

Jeng Your majesty sent for me? (mildly surprised and bored)

Emp Sent for you? Why should I send for you? I have nothing to say to you. Nothing at all! You may leave me. [He begins to go.] Oh! by the-bye, as you are here, there was something I wanted - a receipt - I should be obliged if you'd let my steward have it, some time or other - could you remember? - the receipt of that swallows nest soup you gave me once at dinner - I don't know how many years ago. Five I should think - I've been meaning to ask you for it. It was the most delicious soup I've ever tasted. Do you remember it? [As she speaks, she comes down the steps.]

Jeng I remember that your majesty was pleased to praise a poor soup of mine.

[As he comes in, the Empress begins to go up the steps that lead to the pavilion. Then becoming aware of his presence, she turns round, stops and ostentatiously remembers something]

[She goes up the steps]

Emp. It is the whole summer — oh, shall you ever forget the dinner? I was excited by getting
perfect — drunk.

Emp. Oh! I can't remember that, your majesty.

Emp. Do you know, I think we all got rather drunk on that occasion. And then we came
home in the barge across the lake by moonlight, and somebody or other sang songs
to us — oh! it was all delightful. Why do we never have such parties now?

Emp. Your majesty has only to command —

Emp. To command! Yes — to command! But I hate commanding. What's the good
of commanding? I never used to command in the old days. Then it was nothing but
feasts and fancies — balls and parties and happy-go-lucky parties starting up nobody
knows how and ending in everything that was most ridiculous. Or, if anyone
commanded, it was you. What has happened to change it all? What is the matter?
You look grave. Oh Jesus, come here, and sit down by me, and tell me what is the
matter. [He sits on a bench, & by motions bids Christ beside him. He obeys.]

Jesus Your majesty is condescending. But my position is a difficult one. I fear my
political views do not commend themselves to your majesty.

Emp. Oh, politics, politics! Don't let's talk about politics. Let's talk about songs.
Mary made me a new one the other day — quite heavenly — distilled from the spleen
of nightingales — the easiest thing in the world. If you'll come to supper with me
tonight, & you shall taste it. That will be delightful; there'll be nobody else; after
this play. Then we shall really be able to enjoy ourselves, — really be able
to talk. I haven't talked to you for I don't know how long. You used to be more
assiduous. I suppose you've grown tired of me. Well, I'm to be pitied, for I've
always said that of all the charming men I've met in my life none was more
charming — that is, when he liked, & then you know — then pray Jesus. Don't frown
any more, you serious person, but come to supper, and let me have the peace.

Jesus [Starts up] The peace! Who's talking politics now, your majesty?

Emp. Lord, am not I. Why shouldn't I have them? Are you determined to do nothing to
please me?

HD

Jung I'm determined not to countenance the greatest piece of folly that your majesty could possibly commit - and I must impress once more upon your majesty the strength of the European forces. I know what I'm saying. You cannot stand up against them. The only reasonable policy for your majesty to adopt is to order the immediate suppression of the Boxers, to have Prince Tuan and the rest of their leaders arrested, and to send an ambassador to the European ring for terms of peace. There is still time to do that, so long as the legations stand.

Empr. Never! never! Peace with the foreign devils? I won't hear of it.

Jung Very well then; in that case, there's only one possible course for your majesty. You must frankly give your support to the Boxers, you must join forces with Prince Tuan, resist the foreigners to the death, destroy their legations, and cut off my head. That is really the only alternative.

Empr. Oh! You maddem me! I won't, I won't! And you know I can't. What! Let myself get into Prince Tuan's clutches - that declaiming ass - have him proclaimed ~~nothing~~ ~~Emperor~~ on to the throne - what rubbish! And you have the effrontery - ! Cut off your head indeed! - You tempt me. Oh Jung, Jung, you are cruel. Give me the gun, and we'll pipet the foreign devils together, and march them to Canton, and spend the rest of our lives in ~~Peruvian~~ long pantaya on the Colorado lake. It can be done, it must be done; come to supper and I'll prove it.

Jung I'm afraid it's not much use, your majesty. My mind is made up.

Empr. No, no, no, I have all sorts of arguments - and besides, there's a beautiful cask I can bring wine just come in - a marvellous vintage. You really mustn't resist that. You remember those lines of Tu Fu ?-

"Oh Wine! Who gave to thee thy subtle power?-
A thousand cares in one small goblet drowned!"

Jung Oh, your majesty! Poets are deceivers.

Empr. Statesmen are deceivers. At any rate, now, you must come and have some tea in the pavilion. And think it over. I know I'm right I know I'm right. Come on to tea

[He rises - and rises up two steps into the Pavilion - Jung lies prone, shrugging his shoulders. The Empr. stops for a moment, on the entrance, but Jung lies on the ground a Chinaman with an intellectual, sorrowful countenance, enters, talking rapidly.]

4/1

Tell me. Does Queen Victoria paint?

Lady L. She paints. But her painting is as much like your majesty's as the screech of an owl is like the song of a nightingale.

Emp. I should think so, indeed. What could one expect of a female barbarian? But I'm told that she's rich and powerful. How many eunuchs does she keep? I have five thousand.

Lady L. She has no eunuchs, your majesty.

Emp. What! no eunuchs! A queen without eunuchs! That's a good joke. You'll be telling me next that she has no opera troupes. But it's time for tea. We'll have it in the pavilion. Come along. I must speak to you, Lady L—, for a moment before tea. How quiet it is now that silly frog's stopped! But there's another sound I'm waiting for. The tolling of the bell in the temple of the ten thousand Buddhas.

[Exeunt all except Emperor, Lady L— and King.]

Emperor. Here, there's nobody here; now we can speak. But is it really possible? I still can't believe it. King, King, let me look at you. I am too happy. That you should be with me again! That I should be able to see you, hear you, touch you. How often I've dreamed of this happening. I [illegible] and appearing quite suddenly just as you've appeared now. Am I've always dreamed it myself, this moment makes all the rest a trifle while, and that's what I feel now. And then I've woken up, and found that it was all a dream and that I was alone. Shall I wake up now? Is it a dream now? Oh no, it's not a dream. I am here, you are here. It's all really true. I think I shall die of joy.

(There is a sound of loud laughter from the pavilion)

What's that noise? (he speaks coldly & incuriously)

no, it's the old Buddha laughing in the pavilion.

The Old Buddha? Is she so near? Let's go somewhere else.

We shall be discovered –

Then you talk of dying of joy. I've come back; but is that

worthy? You're as white as a sheet. Die of joy, when

you're still a slave in your own palace? Die of joy, when the

very name of the old Buddha makes you tremble? Die of joy,

when he can still laugh, and you can still be afraid? (?)

Come on, I want to go on living a little longer.

Yes, I want to go on living a little longer.

until you're really got a right to die in. And then, when

you're not – well, I want to go on living a little longer. Yes.

Living – life; what does it all come to? Why put off dying till

the day after tomorrow, when one might die today. What shall I

and in vain! Can you take me that? What will any one

[illegible]

griefs. The best that life has to offer is an occasional joy

that comes [illegible] no one knows how or where and vanishes no one knows

when – [illegible] brief delicious moments when a sudden happiness throbs

and flows – anywhere – everywhere – in the light of the sky, or in

the scattered blossoms of the plum-tree, or in the folds of a woman's

when Oh! Delusions! Delusions! They vanish as they came; ~~and all that they have done for you is to make~~ to leave you the world a little blacker than it was before. Life is a meal of bitter herbs and sour fruits and tough odds and ends, and ashes, with a few sweet things thrown in here and there to prevent one getting used to the nastiness: And it ends with a draught of poison. Well, let's drink the poison when there's a little sugar in our mouthes, and then at least we'll break off smiling. What a chance I lost ten minutes ago, when I first saw you! If I'd only died then -! But I went on living, and the sugar dissolved in my throat; the old Buddha laughed in the pavilion, and the next mouthful I took was all corruption, reflect too much.

Kary If you ~~have taken about it~~ Life's really simply nothing but a matter of my game - part luck, part skill; and the only important question at any given moment is - who will take the next trick? Nobody ever won a trick by general reflections. You must think of the cards.

Imp I've got no head for cards. I only know I've got one trump card, and that's you, Kary.

Kary Oh, you have others; you don't know what's in your hand.

Imp I give my hand over to you. Will you take it, and play it for me? That's the only way I shall ever win.

Kary I'll take it on one condition.

Imp What's that?

Kary That you really leave it to me to play as I think fit. If you again look over my shoulder, and plague [illegible] cards instead of

not. I can't answer for anything. It's a difficult game.

Emp. Too difficult, too difficult.

Kang. You're discouraged because you lost the last game you began that game very well, but then the old Buddha came out with a trump card - Jung Lu and his army, - and carried all before her. Well now there's been another deal, and in this game that trump card is in your hand and not in her hand but in yours.

Emp. Jung Lu! - You really believe that Jung Lu -?

Kang. I think I can answer for Jung Lu. I have been making inquiries. I think it can be arranged.

Emp. But it was Jung Lu who betrayed me.

Kang. Yes, five years ago he betrayed you; but things have changed since five years ago. Jung Lu is not remarkable for his scruples; like the rest of us, he's playing for his own hand; if I can show him that it would pay him to betray the Old Buddha you may be sure that he'd betray her, just as readily as he betrayed you. Besides, there are other things in Jung Lu's life than his ambition. He is an astute politician; but even he has his little weaknesses.

Emp. His little weaknesses?

Kang. Yes, and I think I'm on their track. But leave that to me. In the meantime, remember that you've got another trump card in your hand - and a bigger one even than Jung Lu. That trump card I mean is the European Army.

Emp. But does the European Army still exist? The Old Buddha had

some story about it's being annihilated. And in any case?
there's Li Hung Chang against it, and he's not a man to be trifled with.
Kang. I have just come from the headquarters of the Europeans.
If Li Hung Chang were the greatest general in the world, he'd no
more be able to stand up against their army, with the forces at his
command than a bundle of straw could stand up against a steam
engine. They have set out to relieve the legations; and they will
relieve the legations. That is certain. The only question is how
long they'll take. If Li Hung Chang resists, they may take a week.
If he does not resist, they may be here tomorrow. In any case,
our business is simply to be prepared.
Emp. But what do you mean to do?
Kang. I mean to act, and to act quickly. You will see.
Emp. But how can you act? Don't you see the danger? If the Old
Buddha once realizes that the Europeans are really upon
her, don't you see what she'll do? She'll fly from Pekin, she'll
take me with her; how can I resist? She'll carry me off into the
fastnesses of the north, and what will be the good of the
European army to me then? I shall be as helpless as ever—
more helpless, more helpless. Oh no, no, I can't bear it.
Let me escape now, at once, this moment. If I could disguise
myself—I could make my way
Let me escape now, at once, this moment. If I could disguise
myself—couldn't I disguise myself? There are guards everywhere, but couldn't I
myself—I could make my way
with you to help me, Kang, to the Europeans.
I must be saved. That's my only hope. Come!
Very well; I am ready. It is risky, but I am ready.

Lang: "That's your plan then. It was for that you came?" "To leave her, what figure shall I wear? How marvellous." "To be, perhaps, to be with the Europeans." "How soon can we start?" "Start?" (Her excitement suddenly gives way to a blank gloom.) "And leave—?—No. I am a fool. All that is impossible. I knew it was impossible. I was only taking myself in. "Do you then love a woman?" Well, you're wrong. The truth is—the truth is there is someone here I cannot leave behind.

— . . —

Lang: "Someone?"

Lang: "Yes. You need ask me no more. Someone. Whatever happens I left her she would be destroyed. And—take her with me—! How could I escape with a woman?"

Lang: "It's a woman then—?"

Lang: "It has been that that has kept me back ever since I knew the Europeans had landed their army. I should have tried to escape a hundred times—but with her—impossible! impossible! And to leave her! You can imagine what they would happen to her when they found that I had gone. No, no, I must stay. What did I tell you, Lang? It is all determined. Even you can do nothing now. I see what will happen as clearly as if it were already done. The Europeans will come. But they will come too late. They'll find the bird flown. The Old Buddha will have been beforehand with them, and when they enter the Forbidden City. Oldham the Sun of Heaven will be hurrying away towards the deserts of the north in ruin and despair."

Lang: "That is what you see: it is not what I see. I see a reformed prosperous China, a happy empire, and a wicked woman punished for her crimes. Oh Lang, give me the card to play. Give me the card to play, and you will never

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Lang: "Oh I know—! But how—?"

Lang: "You have given me the card to play. Give me, and you will never do so—trust me."

Emp. With my whole heart, with my whole soul. Save me, save me, save me! You can, you will!

Kang. Very well then. Give me your imperial ring. I must have authority.

Emp. Here it is. What else?

Kang. Now you must leave me. There must be no suspicion that anything is happening. Show yourself to the Court. We shall meet again soon.

Emp. Oh, let me embrace you once more before I go.

Kang. Farewell.

Emp. My own beloved Kang! (You have not yet ...) But will you promise me one thing? Ta-hé! You do not know her, but it is she – it is she who is the woman – the whom I cannot leave. Promise me that, whatever happens, you will not let evil come to her.

Kang. Is this your trust? Be of good courage. Now, go.

[Exit Emperor.]

Voices! Is it Jung Lu? A woman! Ah! [He goes behind curtains.

Enter Jung Lu & Ta Hé

Ta Hé. No, no, no, no.

Jung. Oh, you cruel creature!

Ta Hé. Cruel? I'm not cruel at all. Why do you call me cruel?

Jung. To refuse a drop of water to a man dying of thirst: isn't that cruel!

Ta Hé. Oh, how cruel! You're not dying of thirst. You're laughing all the time.

[Jung Lu comes out of the pavilion. As he does so, Kang slips behind a bush, & watches. Jung Lu waits, & in a moment Ta-hé comes out of the pavilion. Kang watches them and then goes further behind the bushes.]

Ta-hé Well, what do you want? Why did you make those signs to me? ~~Oh, Heavens~~, Suppose the Old Buddha had seen! And your pretending you had to go and review the troops! I don't believe a word of it.

Jung No; you're quite right. The troops were imaginary. I ~~simply~~ privately wanted to come out & talk to you. ~~Heart that~~ Come here, come here, Ta hé, and give me a kiss.

Ta-hé Oh, so that it. Then I shall go back again.

Jung No, no, no, you cruel creature –

Ta-hé Cruel! I'm cruel at all. Why do you call me cruel?

Jung To refuse a drop of water to a man dying of thirst. Isn't that cruel?

Ta-hé Oh, nonsense! You're not dying of thirst. You're laughing all the time.

Ivy How little you understand me! My lips may laugh; but my heart – my heart – Besides who can help laughing when they're with ~~Ja-hé~~ out doors, in the summer, among the flowers, and with Ja-hé?

Ja-hé I'm sure I can't help laughing when I'm with you. You're too absurd.

Ivy I want to kiss a beautiful young lady. Is that absurd?

Ja-hé very absurd – in you. If you were a boy of eighteen – well, then it might be to the point: but you're a man – oh! I don't know how old – forty-five. Darcey, and you're a great man too – a general, a commander-in-chief, a minister of state, and I don't know what besides, and you talk of young ladies! a peacock's feather, and you want to kiss me! Oh, it's ridiculous.

Ivy Here's a book of poetry, (the poet of the poetry has also written the book from which) and this is the first thing I find in it –

"So pluck the blooming flowers betimes, lest when thou com'st again
alas, upon the withered stem no blooming flowers remain!"

There's nothing here about great men, generals, a minister of state. The poet doesn't exclude them; he doesn't say "So pluck the blooming flowers betimes – unless you're a commander-in-chief": no, his advice is addressed to everybody, (when) and he says to everybody, when you say I'm ridiculous, how you must admit you're wrong, because poets are always right.

Ta-fé Poets always right indeed! That's the first I've heard of it.

Jury You can stand here, in this garden, and say that! What have the roses been telling you, and the lilies, and the [illegible], and all the flowers? What have the birds been singing about? I would like to hear? And this air, so cool, so warm, so fresh, so scented, has it wafted no message to you? Does not every breath you draw reveal to you the truths of poetry? Oh! You talk of my being a great man, and a minister, and the rest of it; but I tell you that all that means nothing, more than a set of empty [illegible] about unimportant things. The chirp of a cricket in the grass means more than all the high-resounding titles of the proudest general. The greatest men, at the end of all their labours and their plots and their policies, after they have struggled and schemed for a lifetime, and have achieved at last that thing that is called success – what is their reward do you think? It is simply this – to be able to come out, like me, into the great sunshine of a garden, and to play for a little with love and poetry and the flowers.

Ta-hé How you talk! Anyone would think you were a poet yourself.

Jury Perhaps I am; perhaps we all are – really. Don't you think so, Ta-hé? It is the world that has deluded us – stuffed us up with its nonsense of success and ambition, until we have lost sight of our own souls. The world is the enemy; let us forget the world. There is nothing to remind us of it here. Come a little more. The soul of this person is a poor thing

beside your mouth. Let us forget the world altogether, and only remember poetry and love.

Ja-hé If you hate the world so, why don't you give it up? Why don't you resign, retire, and go away and live in the country? Then you'd really be happy, I suppose; and you could make your pretty speeches all day long to the milkmaids.

Jung Oh! I want to make my pretty speeches to you. I have a villa in the mountains; come there with me, and be my milkmaid. Shouldn't we be happy then?

Ja-hé What! And leave the Old Buddha!

Jung. Come for a week. You could get leave of absence for a week. Nobody You could say you were ill, and nobody would ever know.

Ja-hé Ha, ha, ha! I've other things to do, thank you. Good-bye. I must go back to the Pavilion. (She runs towards the steps)

Jung You're going away? Have I offended you? Ja-hé, wait stop a little!

Ja-hé Well, what is it, you absurdity?

Jung One kiss - one.

Ja-hé (rolls a) Very well then - one. There. Now good-bye.

Jung But we can't part like this. I have a great deal to say to you. Come down into the arbour.

Ja-hé No, no, no. I must go to the Old Buddha. I've dawdled far too long already. (She goes up the steps)

Jung Then we must meet again - this evening. You'll see me this evening, won't you? I'm sleeping in the palace tonight. You shall come and see me then, and we shall be able to talk undisturbed. Ja-hé, I love you. I adore you. Come!

Ja-hé Ha, ha, ha, ha! I may be a blooming flower; but I'm not never going to be plucked by you; never, never, never. Good-bye [Exit.

Jung Oh! you lovely creature! — [He is about to go after her at the right. Kang appears]

Kang Where are you going, Jung Lu?

Jung I beg your pardon —?

Kang. Your road divides here: which path will you take?

Jung I don't know you. Who are you, to venture to speak to me like this?

Kang It does not matter who I am. I am not speaking for myself. I am an emissary.

Jung Oh, indeed. Whose emissary? ~~are you?~~

Kang I come from the West.

Jung Is the man mad?

Kang It is the West that speaks through me. Listen, Jung Lu! You are a careful politician - ~~very~~ a very careful politician. Five years ago you were so careful that you betrayed the Emperor because his reforms were going too fast for you, and you put up the Empress in his place. You believed that you could control the Empress, that you could keep everything smooth and comfortable, that you could guide the country cunningly along the narrow path between reform and reaction: and at first you succeeded very well. But gradually things ~~were~~ changed. The forces of reaction grew stronger & stronger; Prince Tuan and his friends came to the front; and you began to find the Empress less easy to control than you'd supposed. Then the Boxers burst out, and the pot was on the fire. At the present moment, the whole country is seething, the foreign legations are besieged by the Boxers, Prince Tuan is demanding the extermination of every foreigner in China, the Empress is on his side, and a European army is marching on Pekin. This is what your carefulness has come to; and ~~the only thing is that~~ apparently you're very pleased with the result; for all you can do is to go on being careful. You won't allow your army to attack the legations; you won't use it to put Prince Tuan in his place; you just sit still. Oh! you are very careful indeed. Don't you see that the time for carefulness is over? The time for action has arrived.

Jung I believe I begin to recognise the features of the indispensable Kang.

Kang My features are of no consequence; it is only my message that I ask you to attend to. I tell you, Jung Lu, it is the West that speaks through me. For

the last five years I have lived in the West; I have come to understand the West as I never understood it before; and now I have come here to tell you what it is that the West means. Will you listen now? Or will you wait till the cannons thunder it at you? Will you let me teach you? Or do you prefer to have destruction and horror for your masters? Sooner or later you must learn. You cannot escape. None of us shall escape. The West has stretched out its hands over all of us: it has come upon us as an inevitable fate. It is like the sea, like the rising tide, flowing in upon us ceaselessly, remorselessly. Our old bulwarks are of no avail against it: it submerges them: let overwhelms them; who can shut out the sea? The knell of China has rung: the doom of the West is upon her. The ancient, the immemorial, the unchangeable Celestial Empire has reached her last day. ~~The West has spoken, and already she is almost a thing of the past.~~ She reminds me of one of those strange huge slowly moving monsters of the past, the Ichthyosaurus or the Plesiosaurus, a vast slow moving ichthyosaurus or a dinosaur - who were once the most splendid of God's creatures, the rulers of the world, who thought, in their pride, that all the might and majesty of life was concentrated in their vast bodies, and who were wrong; for a new race arose - more active, more intelligent, more finely-organised - and those old, unwieldy, antiquated monsters perished utterly from the earth. For us too, a new race has arisen - the race of the West; and we shall perish as surely as the Dinosaur, and as completely; we shall be nothing, but a half-forgotten name upon the mouths of men. Don't you smell corruption everywhere? Do wherever you look, don't you see decay? Your civilisation, your art, your religion, your palaces, your ceremonies, your mosques and your emperors - it is all tottering into the dust. The West has spoken. I am she, do you understand?

Dear me, I suppose all this means that you want me to do something.

Very kind I want you to face the fact. I want you to grasp that it's no use your trying,

to patch up the jobs you've given us, and that if you persist it will be the worse for you. And why, pray, do you imagine that I don't see them?

Jung Quite right. I am inclined to agree with you. I have the profoundest respect for the military methods of the Europeans. I have no doubt that in a very short time they will be masters of the situation. Haven't I shown this very clearly? I have readily agreed to attack the foreign legations. What more do you want?

Kang I want a great deal more. I want you to give up the Old Buddha.

Jung Oh indeed.

Kang I want you to throw your weight once & for all on to the side of reform. You admit that that is the side that is bound to triumph in the end. The only question is whether it is to triumph peacefully, or in bloodshed and confusion. Unless you give up the Old Buddha, you know there'll be a row.

Jung On the whole, I'm inclined to agree with you. But let me explain. You accused me just now of being a careful politician. I assure you I'm nothing of the sort. I'm not careful; I'm simply indolent.

Kang Well, you'll find it easier to be indolent my way than yours.

Jung Shall I? Is that quite certain? If you can assure me of that —

Kang You want assurances? I understand. I do not speak without authority. I have here the imperial seal. What offices, what dignities, what emoluments do you require? I can promise you an imperial patent which will amply satisfy you, dating from the moment when the Old Buddha has been removed and the Emperor restored to power.

Jung This looks like business. I think we shall come to terms. I have no wish to support the Old Buddha. She is a headstrong ignorant old woman, quite without political capacity. It's I who have been ruling China for the last five years, & the time she can get on without me; she'll find she's mistaken.

She's the dupe of her own vanity. Besides that, She's beginning to be a bore. She had better go.

Yang. You are with us, then?

Kang. Yes, I am with you.

Yang. The Emperor can depend upon you?

Kang. absolutely.

Yang. You are ready to carry out whatever directions he may think fit to give?

Kang. certainly.

Yang. I shall go & inform him of this at once.

Kang. Just as you like. But there's no particular hurry. Nothing can be ready for a week or ten days —

Yang. A week or ten days! —

Kang. Yes, it will take at least a week or ten days, before we can make our preparations —

Yang. A week or ten days! — What's the matter?

Kang. Are you joking? Don't you see, if we're going to do anything at all, we must do it at once

Kang. well, as you will not do it at once. I shall begin thinking about it tomorrow.

Yang. But you don't understand. We must act now. It must be all over by tomorrow. It must be done tonight.

Kang. Tonight? Oh nonsense; that's impossible. What noise is that?

Yang. I hear no noise. Don't you see, if we delay a moment, the Old Buddha will get wind of it, and —

Kang. Oh, you're a young man in a hurry. Tonight is out of the question. In three or four days perhaps —

Yang. No, no, tonight! tonight! I insist upon tonight [confused noise & shouting is heard outside]

Yang. That noise is getting nearer. Some row up. I suppose. I assure you it's no use your insisting; that is out of the question

But Jung Lu —

No, no — It sounds to me as if they were coming in the direction. I shall go across and fetch the Body guard. We can't have riots here. [Going.]

You must listen to me. You need do nothing. I can arrange everything. You can delegate your authority to me. It only needs one word. Don't you see what hangs on this? Wait! Jung Lu, if you'll consent, I'll give you what you most want in the world.

What do you mean.

(pointing to the Forbidden) You shall have her.

Ha-ha?

Tonight; if you will do this tonight.

You promise that?

Will you give me the command of the troops till five o'clock tomorrow morning? If I disappoint you, you agree, & you shall have what you want. If I disappoint you, you can do what you like afterwards. You can kill me; you can re-instate the Old Buddha; the troops will be yours again. But I shall not disappoint you.

We'll talk of this later.

No; now or never. I shall not make the offer again.

You are intemperate. The flower is in its bloom. Tonight! I agree. Meet me in an hour! I must fetch the Body guard! — Tonight!

And I must go to the emperor. [As they go out, the noise increases. An enormous crash in the gate.]

Help: help! help!

We shall be killed: we shall all be killed!

Let's keep out of the Pavilion.

Let's hide behind this seat. [Other Eunuchs rush in, pursued by Boxers.]

Help: help. Mercy! They'll kill us! What have we done?

Be silent! It will be important to have seen the Palace tonight. I've told the Old Buddha's guard nothing. Do you know the password? Jung. The password? I'll find that out for you. Now!

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Boxers Where is the Empress? We will see the Empress! We are betrayed! Dog, where is the Empress?

Enter Prince Tuan, Duke Lan, & Boxers.

Tuan Is the Empress here? Yes, my fellow-citizens, you shall have satisfaction. This state of things can last no longer. For the sake of our country, let us insist upon our rights.

Boxers Hurrah for Prince Tuan! Death to the foreign devils! The Empress! The Empress!

The Empress appears at the top of the steps leading to the Pavilion.

Emp. What is all this?

Li The Boxers, your majesty! The Boxers will kill us all!

Boxers Down with the foreign devils! Down with the Empress! The arsenal, the arsenal!

Emp. Silence! (She comes down the steps) What do you want?

Tuan Your Majesty –

Emp. Ah! Prince Tuan! So this is your doing, is it? I'm not surprised. It's in keeping with the rest of your behaviour. But I have nothing to say to you. (To Boxers) Show my men, what is it that you want?

1st B. Your Majesty –

2nd B. So please your Majesty –

Emp. Speak out. Must I come nearer? (She goes towards them. 3rd Eunuch runs forward)

3rd E. Do not come nearer, your Majesty, do not come nearer! They'll bewitch you!

Emp. (Major Domo, take) Out of my way.

3rd E. Your Majesty, they're devils –

Emp. How dare to speak to me? (To Eunuchs) Take hold of him. Drag him away. Beat him. cut off his ears. (To Boxers) Now listen to me. I know quite well why you have come here like this. It was because you were ordered to stop your

(The eunuchs drag him out. Exit Eunuchs & Boxers)

firing on the houses of the foreign devils. Isn't that so?

Yes, your majesty

And you dared to believe that my order showed I was favourable to the foreign devils, that I was on their side, that I wished them to escape, and that I was going to betray my own countrymen?

Prince Tuan told us so, your majesty.

Precisely; Prince Tuan. And who is Prince Tuan? Is he the Son of Heaven? What does Prince Tuan know of my councils and my commands? You listen to Prince Tuan, and you have the insolence to come here brawling and shouting into my presence, to terrify my servants, to insult the imperial majesty itself! What! Do you dictate to me? Do the cockchafers dispute with the eagle? Do the worms tell the lion the path he is to go? Ha! You begin to tremble now, you begin to think that perhaps it wasn't such a clever thing after all to push your way into my privacy, and lift up your voices against the Most High. Return to your homes! And prepare for the fitting punishment that will come upon you. But wait! I have a mind to tell you why it was that I ordered your firing to stop. It was because I chose that it should stop. I have willed it to stop; and stop it shall, until I will it to begin again. As for you, Prince Tuan, I think you have forgotten that you are living on a pension paid from the imperial purse. ~~Be careful, or with regret, your memory to bid that pension halved,~~ ~~I shall withdraw half your pension.~~ And you may think yourself lucky that it is not altogether confiscated. Avoid my presence. [Exit Prince Tuan, & followers] You see the sort of stuff your leaders are made of. You are silly fellows; you have been taken in. (Gravely) I am not angry with you; I pardon even your conduct has been outrageous; but I pardon you. You shall begin your firing again tomorrow morning. Have you forgotten that I am a woman? I to have no rest? Have I have put up with their noise for weeks, and now, when I stop it for half-an-hour, you grow insolent. Have you forgotten that I am a woman? No, I am not angry; only

and supper afterward.
Jung Lu By-the-bye, perhaps I'd better know the password.
Empr. Oh, the password is "Heavenly Purity". Don't forget.
Jung Lu I shall not forget, your majesty. Empr. Where is Li? X
disappointed. That you should just so little trust in the Old Buddha!
Li. We not trust the Old Buddha! Who else do we trust? Hurrah! hurrah!
Long live her majesty!
Empr. My friends! I see that you understand me. There is no more to be said. Go
away now quietly. As for the foreign devils, have I not given rewards to those
who have captured them? How great will be the rewards when their legations
are taken, and they are all slain!
Li. Hurrah for the Old Buddha! Hurrah for the Old Buddha! [Exeunt.

Enter Jung Lu

Jung Your majesty, the bodyguard is ready to disperse the rioters.
Empr. You are a little late with your bodyguard, Jung Lu. I have dispersed
the rioters myself. Are you still in your bad temper?
Jung Will your majesty forgive me? I shall come to the Palace tonight.
Empr. Ah! Then I shall see you at the theatre first. X Where is Li? Is my barge
ready? I shall go afloat for a time on the Lake. 4
This day alone gives me enjoyment - this!
Why then await tomorrow's doubtful bliss?"
(To Li) No news, no news?
Li. None, your majesty.
Empr. And that miserable wretch who dared to stand in my way just now - has
he been beaten?
Li. Five hundred strokes, your majesty.
Empr. And his ears? Have you cut off his ears?
Li. They are off, your majesty.
Empr. Oh, they're off, are they? Let me see them. Bring them to me on the barge.

[She goes out through the gate with her train. Jung Lu remains alone in the garden.]

Jung Lu remains alone in the Heavenly Purity Palace
Jung Lu [illegible]. plucks the blooming flower between, lest when they come again
the curtain falls.

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Act III

IV 0

Same as Act I. Night. The room is gaining lighted by torches.
Kang and Ja-hé discovered.

Ja-hé You are a wicked, wicked man.

Kang Never mind whether I'm wicked. Listen to what I say — you've got to do as I tell you.

Ja-hé I shan't. Why should I? Who are you? I don't know you. You say you're Kang; how am I to know you're Kang? He said that Kang was a good man, and his friend. I don't believe a word you say.

Kang Will you do as I tell you?

Ja-hé It's no good your trying to frighten me.

Kang ~~If you say you don't know who I am well I shall think you~~ You will have to do as I tell you.

Ja-hé Why do you speak like that?

Kang You will see. You say you don't know who I am. Very well; I shall show you. Come here; come here, I say. You've guessed already that I'm not an ordinary man. Look at this box. (He produces a small black box.) It's a magic box. There's a certain spell I know; and whenever I say that spell a demon, quick as lightning, comes into this box.

Ja-hé A demon! You are a magician then?

Kang One of the greatest.

Ja-hé Oh!

Kang Now look. I am going to say the spell. Look at the box. ~~Abracadabra, abracadabra, abracadabra!~~

~~Ja-hé (howling) Father of Heaven, protect us!~~

~~Kang What did you see?~~

Ja-hé No, no; I'd rather not. I don't want to. Don't make me look at the box.

Kang If you're not careful you'll make the demon angry with you, and then he'll jump out of the box, and come after you. Look!

Ta-hé Very well, I'm looking.

Kang Abracadabra, abracadabra, hey, presto! (He presses the button and flashes the light into her face)

Ta-hé (shrinking) Father of Heaven, protect us all!

Kang What did you see?

Ta-hé I saw the demon's eye looking at me, and it was so bright I was all dazzled. He won't come out of the box, will he?

Kang Not if you do as you are told. Now look again. Do you see that shaft of light? That's where the demon's eye is looking. It can point everywhere; and he can see through whatever it points at as if it was glass. When it points at you, he can see through you to your very heart. You can't escape him. He can see all your most secret thoughts in a moment; and what he sees he tells to me.

Ta-hé Oh no, no, keep him away from me. I don't want him to see into me.

Kang It's too late: he's seen already everything there is to see. And I'll tell you one thing. He saw what you were doing this afternoon in the garden, with Jung Lee.

Ta-hé Along with Jung Lee!

Kang He saw you kissing Jung Lee.

Ta-hé Did he see that?

Kang Yes; he saw you kissing the man you say you're afraid of and that you hate and that you won't go near. So he understands very well that it's all nonsense what you're now saying, and that you're going to do as you're told.

Ta-hé Oh, but you don't understand: His majesty — what would his majesty say if — if —

Kang Look here, Ta-hé, have you ever seen this before?

Ta-hé It's my lord's imperial ring! Did he give you that?

Kang He gave me that; and with it he gave me his imperial power. He made me his second self. He gave me the right to command as he commands, and he made it your duty and everyone's, to obey me as you obey him.

Ta-hé The imperial ring!

Kang So you see what a foolish girl you've been all this time, refusing to do my bidding. You were surprised when you found I was a magician; but did you suppose that the friend of the Son of Heaven would be an ordinary man? Oh, you poor, light, ignorant creature! And you dare to venture to look up, and ask questions, and say you won't do this and daren't do that, and tell me that you don't know me, and that I am a wicked man – I, (the great magician and) Kang, the bearer of the imperial ring! But now you know better, now you see how silly and how disobedient you've been; and now you will do as you're told.

Ta-hé Pardon me, great magician, pardon me! I will do anything. Only tell me this – does his majesty know?

Kang What is hidden from the Son of Heaven? It is for his sake that you are to do this thing.

Ta-hé For his sake? I obey.

Kang That is right. But there is one thing more. It is most simple; you must obey in silence. No word of this to a single soul, or the demon will come out of her box!

Ta-hé Not even to his majesty? If his majesty knows –?

Kang You are beginning to be disobedient again. Be careful! No, to no one – not even to His Majesty. Swear it by the foot of Buddha.

Ta-hé I swear it by the foot of Buddha.

Kang Good girl. You shall have a present – a jade necklace, perhaps. Meet me in half an hour in the purple chamber, and tell them, silence!

Ta-hé A jade necklace! Did you say a jade necklace!

Kang I said perhaps a jade necklace. And now I am going to vanish. But remember, even when I'm not there, the demon's eye is upon your heart.

(He flashes the electric lamp in her eyes, & slips out among the shadows.)

Ta-hé He has vanished! Oh, heavens! What a marvellous magician!

Enter the Emperor

Emp Who is a marvellous magician?

Ta-hé Oh my Lord! Kang – your friend Kang.

Emp That is quite true. When he waves his wand, mirrors ~~and cabinets~~ follow. And he is waving it now.

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a-hé How? He didn't show me his wand. What happens when he waves it? Does the demon come out?

up Ha, ha! The demon! No, the demon goes down - down - down. That's what happens when Kang waves his wand. It is getting late. (He begins to walk up & down) How slow the time passes! Where is Kang? When did you see him? What can he be doing? He told me I must meet him here - but it is not time yet. No, it is not time! (He begins to pace about the room) How slow - how slow.... Have you ever noticed the horrible slowness of time?

a-hé What are you waiting for, my lord?

up The best plan is not to think of it. If you can only do that, days, weeks, years fly past you in a moment, and it is time for you to die almost before you have begun to live. That is the best plan. Because, if you once begin to look into it, there is no end to the business: an hour stretches to an age, and five minutes grows into an eternity. Have you ever seen one of those English watches that have little hands in them made to turn round in a minute? Have you ever watched that little hand to see how long a minute really is? You would think a minute was a short time enough; but it is not - it is endless - endless. The hand is so slow going round that you can't believe it, and you lose patience, and at last you give up looking at it long before the minute's past. Well, I shall have watches made with a smaller hand still, to go round in seconds; and then you'll see that even a second can spin itself out to infinitude; and one might go on like that for ever. But what's so horrible about it is that there's no escaping it. ~~[illegible]~~ ~~can move it by a hair's breadth, no power can so much as touch it~~. We are all of us entangled in this dreadful inexorable mesh of Time like flies in a spider's web; and yet - and this is the ridiculous, the horribly ridiculous part of it - what is it after all, this inexorable terror? - it is nothing, it is nowhere, it is a vision, an imagination; it is all in our own heads, my dear, all in our own heads.

hé Is my lord ill?

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Emp. Ill? No Why should I be ill? I am very well (Coughs) But I am excited. That is it. I can't help being excited.

Ta-hé Are you expecting something?

Emp Yes.

Ta-hé What is it? Won't you tell me?

Emp. I am expecting ... everything. There is to be a change.

Ta-hé Do you mean ...? The Old Buddha ...?

Emp. Hush! – Yes. Her virtues are going to be rewarded at last.

Ta-hé Oh my lord! [Do you mean today?] How? When? –

Emp Tonight; very soon; you shall see. Kang has arranged everything. That's what I meant by the wonders. He has done it all. It is all going to happen – at last! – at last!

Ta-hé You'll get tired, walking about so. Won't you sit down a little?

Emp At last! Yes! The tables turned! Vengeance! Victory! The new era! The old wickedness wiped out, cut off root and branch, utterly abolished! A splendid, prosperous, enlightened China! Ah! Light! light! [Light!] It is all darkness here – all decay and dirt and darkness. Away with it! Away with that throne and all its terrors! Away with these merely remnants of antiquity! Beat down the walls, break open the roof, and let in the fresh air of heaven, and the light! Light, I say, light! Don't you see that it's not only I who am a prisoner here? It is you no less than me; it is all of you – every one of you; and the Old Buddha is the closest prisoner of all. Prisoners of darkness! This is a dungeon, not a palace; and that throne there, coming [out] of its intertwining dragons, is the ~~hideous~~ image of the ~~utter~~ ignorance and the superstition that reign over us, and bend us round, and crush us to the earth. What is its virtue? Oh! It is old. it is very old. That is its glory; that is its consecration. It has always stood here; and so stand here it always must. Well, I say that that is false. And I shall prove it on you, grim portent! Once more!

palace; and that throne there, with those dragons, twisting together on it -- oh! those dragons! those accursed dragons! How I hate them! They haunt me; they have branded themselves on my mind; I can't escape them. I see them in my dreams, and when I'm awake they start up before my eyes like ghastly spectres. Oh! Oh! -- Do you know what they represent? They are ignorance and the other is superstition; and that throne there, where they intertwine, that throne I mean, up there so hideous - it is the image of the power that has raised those dragons up, the power that reigns over us, and hems us round, and crushes us to the earth. What is its virtue? Oh! It is old, it is very old. That is its glory; that is its consecration. It has always stood here; and so stand here it always must. Well, I say that that is false. And I shall prove it on you, grim portent! Once more I shall use

~~Nothing~~ you - once more; to your own undoing. Then you will see that change and light are greater things than age and darkness. Then all the anguish I have suffered on you, and all the accumulated agonies of those long generations that you have lorded over, shall rise up against you and blast you; and you will be annihilated. You will have had your day. (He sinks down, coughing, on to a seat.)

Ta-hé There! You see you've tired yourself out; and now you're coughing. You mustn't get so excited. You're quite flushed.

Emp. Yes, I must keep calm. I must keep calm.

Ta-hé Your poor head's burning. This'll never do. You'd better lie down for a little - there.

Emp. Yes, put your arms round me. Do you know what, you angel? - very soon we shall go away.

Ta-hé Go away? I've made up my mind - nothing shall stop me.

Emp. Yes, ~~I shall~~ go right away: the soon as this is over. We shall travel. We shall go all over the Empire, and see new countries - towns and rivers and mountains such as you've never dreamt of. And we shall see the sea. Isn't it absurd, Ta-hé, that we've neither of us ever seen the sea?

Ta-hé Oh, but you won't take me with you.

Emp. Why not? Of course I shall take you. Don't you want to come?

Ta-hé But my lord will not want his servant.

Emp. Not want -? What do you mean? Are you joking?

Ta-hé ~~No~~ It is my lord who is joking. To talk so! - When he knows well enough ....

(with a sob) Oh! My lord will not want his servant any more.

Emp. Ta-hé! You are crying! What is it? What is the matter?

Ta-hé I cannot say. I have a pain - here. (pointing to her breast)

Emp. A pain? Are you ill? She is ill - she -

Ta-hé No, no! I am not ill. But I cannot speak. (She rises.) I must leave you, my lord. If I stayed, I should speak; and if I spoke - Oh, I have promised, promised him - I dare not.

Emp But I don't understand. You can't leave me like this. Ta-ta! - Ta-ta - does it
mean does it mean that you don't love me any more.
Nerissa my love will see that I love him. Farewell. [Exit]
Emp (going after her) Oh stop, stop! I beseech you -

Enter Kang

Kang Where are you going? It is time to get ready. Everything is prepared. You
must come at once to the Phoenix Hall.
Emp But she I must see her first. There has been some mistake a misunderstanding
Kang Ta-ta? do you mean? You can see her later. There isn't a moment to lose now. You must really come at once
Emp But she seemed so dreadfully hurt. If I can I could put it right, if I only knew -
Kang You couldn't make out what was the matter?
Emp Not in the very least.
Kang No. Well, we can easily find out later on: you'll have plenty of time for seeing her
then But now it would be fatal to keep things waiting. You have got to put
on Our friends are collected in the Phoenix Hall. Prince Han, Duke Lan, and the others have been
arrested, and are in close custody. Have you got it all clear in your mind what
you have to do? You won't forget about the unfurling of the flag? It's just those silly
things that impress people.
Emp Yes. I think I remember it all - and the flag, yes.
Kang Then well, then, come. And you had better say a word or two to the soldiers as
you pass [Exeunt]

Enter Two Eunuchs.

1st E. A vulture has been hovering about the Palace all day, and this evening it
perched on one of the pinnacles.
2nd E. That means death.
1st E. Yes. And then I am told that a ghostly fox has been flitting down the long
corridor
2nd E. That happened last when the old Emperor died. 68

1st E. Yes. And the milk turned sour, all at once, just as it did then.

2nd E. What does that mean?

1st E. It means a change [They slide to the back of the stage]

Enter 3 more Eunuchs

2nd E. Why is the palace so full tonight?

4th E. Don't you know?

5th E. They say that something is going to happen, and I shouldn't be surprised if it did.

4th E. The sooner the better. I'm sick of it. I'm off.

Enter other Eunuchs

3rd E. Well then, so am I.

[illegible] They never understand it.

Three E's And I, and I.

2nd E. They never can't stand it. Such rockets and disturbances! Foreign devils there, Boxers there – I've been fifty years in the service of the palace and I've never known such goings on. And I'm getting old. I've decided to retire.

5th E. Is it true that our army has been defeated by the foreign devils, and that they're marching on Pekin?

1st E. No; lots of ours have been annihilated.

2nd E. How did that happen?

5th E. They destroyed each other. Come over here. How long are you going to stay in this place?

Enter three Ladies.

1st L. I hate her! Cross, disagreeable, overbearing, never satisfied — oh! I should like to spit in her face from the sun she gets, merely that you'd think there'd never been anyone

2nd L And so vain too! [illegible] by the way she walks the room to think herself the cleverest and the softest and the most beautiful woman she ever lived. Nobody can paint as well as she does, nobody [illegible] nobody has read so much as she has, nobody is as tall as she is, and nobody has such small feet. Do you know I'm sure she always really believes that she's youngest woman in the room?

P.L. Isn't it ridiculous? And all because she happens to be an Empress. If she weren't an Empress she'd never dare to give herself such airs. And everybody knows it's a mere accident whether one's an Empress or not. You or I might have been Empresses, if we'd only had the luck.

P.L. Well, at any rate, they say her pride's to have a fall now, and I'm sure I'm not sorry.

P.L. When I first came here, I thought I was in heaven. It was all smiles and graces then. Such consideration! Such favours! Was I comfortable? Was I happy? And little treats and jokes in private, and presents every day. Then after a week or two the wind changed. She did ever since it's been nothing but temper, fault finding, and blowings-up from morning till night.

P.L. That's always the way with her. It's like a child with a new toy. She thinks people are toys. When they're new they amuse her, and nothing's too good for them; then she gets tired of them, and kicks them about the room. Perhaps now she'll begin to find out what it's like to have a change of fortune herself.

P.L. What are you going to do? Are you going to stay here?

P.L. I was doing her hair this morning, and as usual she was in a furious temper. After I'd combed it and combed it, she shrieked at me and said I'd combed all the hair off her head. I swore I'd done nothing of the sort, and then she made me show her the comb, and there it was, of course, full of her filthy old hair. Oh! You should have heard her raging! She threatened to have me locked up & fed on bread & water. How I longed to tell her that an old hag of sixty couldn't be surprised if some of her hair came out!

P.L. Why don't you go back to your father?

P.L. She'd never let me.

P.L. She won't be able to prevent you much longer.

P.L. What! Do it turn them -?

P.L. He's done for. I know it for certain. I'd much rather, so. Let's all go, [illegible]

2nd L. Yes, come with us.

1st L. What, now? At once? But the play? We were going to see a play with her

3rd L. There won't be a play. At any rate I shan't go & see it. I shall go with at the moment she comes in.

2nd L. So shall I. And if she speaks to me I shan't answer.

3rd L. Nor shall I. Here she comes. Look out for squalls.

1st L. But what the commotion -?

3rd L. Oh, there won't be many of them left either.

Enter the Empress, attended by women & eunuchs.

Emp. Is the play ready! We'll take our places now. Come along. What is it called? I've just had a letter from Mrs Conger, silly woman, from the foreign devils' legations - thanking me for my gracious present of flowers and fruit. What was I thinking to When did I send her flowers and fruit, and why? I've forgotten all about it

Lic this morning yesterday. If your Majesty will recollect, overcome by your generosity

Emp generosity! Oh, was it it? Yes, I remember now; I did it to spite Prince Tuan. Generosity's just the word I mean. I can do without Mrs Conger's thanks. Do you suppose she'll write and ask me for the bombardment when it begins again tomorrow morning? Oh! Do you remember when she came to see me, and I offered to show her my private apartments? - "Oh your Majesty, what an honour! What a distinguished token of regard!" - Didn't she say that? - "Not at all, Mrs Conger, not at all." - And so I we went to an old room at the top of a turret that hadn't been used in for years, and all done up in purple velvet - a colour that makes me sick. (Imagine me in the) Then, Mrs Conger, I spending my leisure hours, when I rest, when the affairs of state are over, doing my crochet-work, and thinking of Queen Victoria" - "Oh, your Majesty, how interesting! And so purple is your favourite colour?" - "As you see, Mrs Conger, as you see." And the poor dear woman went off to write a book on the Home Life of the Empress Dowager. I believe she's writing it now: in the

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intervals of the bombardment.

2nd L. (aside to 3rd L.) I've heard that story before.

3rd L. (aside to 2nd L.) Oh? Three times.

emp. Well, are we coming? What did you say was the name of the play?

Li The name of the play, your majesty, is - "The four foolish fairies and the two wicked ones."

emp. I don't know it - two foolish fairies and two wicked ones. It sounds like the World, doesn't it - all fools and knaves. That's what the world is. And that the fools are in the majority, otherwise the knaves wouldn't have enough to live upon. Which are you, Li, fool or knave? What do you think, Lady Ling? - You don't answer. Well, if you ask me, I think he's a little bit of both. Don't you think so? - I ask you, don't you think so? - - Is the woman deaf? - Or dumb? I am speaking to you, madam. You don't answer. - What has come over this woman?

L I think she is unwell, your majesty. - Ill feeling of nausea...

emp. Unwell? Nausea? Nonsense! She shall stand by me all through the play, and if she doesn't laugh at every joke — Come along.

Li I am very sorry, your majesty. The actors - the truth is, the actors, your majesty - the actors - [he shudders with terror.]

emp. Well, what about the actors!

Li The actors, your majesty, are not - not ready -

emp Not ready? What do you mean - not ready? But I gave orders. They were to wait upon me. Not ready! What —? She [While she has been talking to Li, the ladies & eunuchs have been slipping quietly out of the room. She now looks round, & finds the room nearly empty. A many of the eunuchs have taken torches with them, so that it is much darker.] What is this? - A joke? - Impudence! Darkness! What does this mean? Where have they gone? What does this mean, I say?

Li I can only suppose, your majesty, that they have all been taken ill.

T.S.

Emp. Nausea? All of them? - There are some more going out! Where are you going? Stop them! Tell the eunuchs to stop them. [The rest of the ladies go out, followed by the eunuchs. The stage becomes very dark.] They disobey me! This is a conspiracy! [The three ladies come in again on tip-toe.]

1st L. Ulla (in a high voice) Who docked my salary this morning?

3rd L. (Ulla) Who said I squinted?

1st L. (running forward) You old cat! [They rush out. The Empress stands aghast.

Emp. Incredible insolence! They dare-!-Seize them! Decapitate them! - Order up the eunuchs - ! Le! You stand there like a post, and do nothing! Don't you see there's a revolt! Why don't you do something? Send for the eunuchs - send for the guard -

Le Doesn't your majesty understand? - We are alone.

Emp. That's just what I'm complaining of, you old idiot.

Le Listen, your majesty!

Emp. I can hear nothing.

Le Precisely. This whole wing of the Palace has been deserted. The rooms all round are quite empty. Everyone has gone. We are alone.

Emp. Oh! - It is that, then -? - I begin to understand you. It's that way the wind lies? Something's happened. Is that it? - The sinking ship ... the rats .... Oh, for heaven's sake don't stand there like that with your toes turning in and that stare on your face: it gives me cold shudders down the back. Ulla Come, tell me the truth. Out with it! What am I to expect? What has happened?

Le Your majesty can see as well as I can what has happened - we have been left alone. It is not for me to make comments. As to what your majesty is to expect, may I remind your majesty, in the words of Aeschylus the revered Sage, that the course of the future is hidden even from Kings?

Emp. I see. Even you have turned against me. You are insolent; you dare to be insolent to me. Why didn't you go with the others? Why don't you go now? Go! I don't want you. Does it you feeling ill, like the rest of them? Hasn't

reason attached you? - Oh, Li-hi, aren't you ashamed of yourself? After all these years! Look at the throne! Look at the throne of my fathers! They say the spirits of the dead hover round the places they knew best on earth; and if that's so - and they shouldn't it be so? - how many imperial ghosts there may be now, crowded about the Dragon Throne! Don't you feel them, Li? Don't you almost see them? Can't you hear them, upbraiding you in your heart? Oh my fathers! Have I been unfaithful to you? Have I not worshipped you, succoured you, upheld you? Has not your cause been my cause? your honour my honour? has not my whole life been simply yours? And you reward me with this? No, no, I will not believe it. You will stand by me, if no one else will. You will save me, you mighty dead! (Li gradually drinks off) - Ha! I see you've taken your opportunity, Li. You're going off at last.

Li up. Your majesty ordered me to go: I am going. Has your majesty any further command? The ship must be sinking pretty fast if Li's among the rats. Go away, you wretched old sinner - but listen to me! The course of the future is hidden from kings - very true; well then, is it revealed to eunuchs? You think I'm doomed, do you? But supposing you're wrong? With what face will you confront me then? Have you thought of that?

Li up. Whatever else happens, your majesty may always depend upon the absolute propriety of my face. [Exit.]

up. Away with you! - No! Wait! - Alone, now! - Wait, I say! - Shall I go after him? No, better stay here and see what comes of it. How dark it is! The place seems full of devils. There are strange shadows in the corners. Is there anyone there? Is there anyone there, I say? No answer. What sound was that? Is that a face? I thought I saw a face there. Devils! Devils! - Is it my husband? My husband! - My son! - No, no, no, hold off, hold off. I didn't do it, I tell you I didn't do it. I'm your friend, not your enemy. Why do they press on me so? They're coming down in thousands - they're crushing me. Where am I? Ah! the throne! I shall hold to the throne. (She crouches down by the throne. There is silence for a moment, then

(As she hesitates, Jung Lu enters from the other side mistaking her in the darkness)

Jung Lu (Ah! You are here then! Come to me! You amazing creature! Come quickly!

Emp. Jung Lu!

(recognising the Empress)

Jung (Hastily back) Your majesty! – What is this? Alone here? In the darkness? Unattended?

Emp. Yes. There has been a plot. I have been deserted. What does it mean?

Jung Let me call the guard. Instant punishment – let me call the guard.

Emp. Call the guard; yes. – And leave me alone here?

Jung Your majesty can come to no harm in the Hall of Heavenly Purity. (You may expect the Emperor back in the moment.

Emp. Jung Lu! can I trust you? What drench you suddenly cold just now? You spoke at first with an ardour – it was like the old days again – and then all at once you changed ... Oh Jung Lu, are you too be strange to me?

Jung Your majesty thinks that! And you saw just now what I felt – my devotion, my adoration –

Emp. You love me. Then kiss me; kiss me and save me, oh save me! (She throws herself into his arms)

Jung (Having me, oh! Your majesty! (She disengages herself) And now I must go to the guard. Stay here, and in a moment or two your majesty will have no further jewels about my person. (Exit

Emp. What does that mean? No further doubts? – He leaves me too. Alone! Alone! – How dark it is! The place seems full of devils. There are strange shadows in the corners. Is there anyone there? Is there anyone there, I say? No answer. What sound was that? Is that a face? I thought I saw a face there. Devils! Devils! – Is it my husband? My husband! – My son! – No, no, no, hold off, I didn't do it, I tell you, I didn't do it. I'm your friend, not your enemy. Why do they press on me so? They're coming, down in thousands – they're crushing me. Jung Lu, Jung Lu, save me! (Where am I? oh! the throne! I shall hold by the throne. (She crouches down by the throne. There is silence for a moment, then

a tramp of approaching footsteps is heard, and the Emperor enters with Kang, Manchus, and a bodyguard with a blaze of torches. The room is seen to be lined all round by soldiers.)

Empress (pointing at Empress) Arrest that woman! (Soldiers spring forward)

Empress Stand back! Don't dare to touch me! (To Emperor) What right have you to give such orders? The imperial power is vested in me, not you. Your own edict has declared it. I am ruler here.

Emperor (stepping on to the throne) I resume my authority. (He sits)

Empress (cutting in) Jung Lu! Jung Lu! You have betrayed me.

Emperor Five years ago it was my will to permit you to participate in my imperial power. I handed over to you the control of the government. During the five years the use which you have made of that authority during the five years does not justify me in allowing you a further extension of the trust I reposed in you. I therefore withdraw again into my own person all the powers with which you were endowed; and I put you under arrest.

Emperor (with a laugh) Oh, and there is my old friend Kang. Now I begin to understand a little. How are you, Kang? We haven't met for the last five years.

Emperor Before you are put in custody, I shall inform you that a commission will be immediately appointed to examine into your conduct of the government. The charges against you are grave. If those charges are proved, you my clemency will probably be extended towards you, and you will be permitted to reside in one of the towns on the Northern Frontier during my pleasure. Guards, remove the prisoner. (The soldiers move forward)

Empress (with a laugh) This is simply a usurpation.

Emperor Wait! When a subject leaves the presence of the sovereign, a universal custom has obtained that the ceremony of kowtowing should be performed. I can see no reason why that custom should be omitted now.

Empress How can I do it — you want me to kowtow to you? — me to you? Oh! This is too much.

Emperor I order you to kowtow to me.

Empress You order me, do you? Well then, master Emperor, I disobey your order

Emperor Must I remind you of the punishment ordained by the law of an Empire for disobedience to the sovereign's command? It is the punishment of immediate death. Look behind you. Are you going to obey me now?

Empress (looks behind her and sees an executioner with drawn sword) Oh! — You! — Is there not a creature here to help me —?

Emperor You still hesitate? Executioner, do your duty. (The executioner lifts his sword)

Empress No, no! You force me. — Very well then, take it for what it's worth. (She kowtows. As she rises, a great bell begins to boom in the distance. It continues till the end of the scene. A look of triumph comes over her face.) The temple of the ten thousand Buddhas! de Hung Chang at last! (She kowtows again, with elaborate irony.)

Emperor What is that noise? I am feeling ill.

Kang (to officer) Take her away. (The Empress is hurried out)

Emperor (suddenly rising) Where am I?

Kang All is well; you are safe — among your own friends. sit down, I beg you, and give the order about the flag.

Emperor (sitting down again) Yes, the imperial standard. (Suddenly remembering) What has happened to Ta-he? I mean Ta-he

Kang "His majesty commands me to tell you that as a token of his gracious resumption of the burdens of authority he has seen fit to order, in accordance with the immemorial custom on such great occasions, to state the unfurling of the imperial standard. Long live his majesty!

Manchus Long live his majesty! (Kang Yi waves a sign and the imperial standard, embroidered with two alternating Dragons, unrolled.)

Emperor The Dragons! the Dragons! (The whole assembly kowtows, as the curtain falls.)

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Act IV. IV 0

The grey light of early morning reveals.

A courtyard in the Palace precincts. On the right, the palace itself, with windows, parapets and steps. On the left, a gateway into a courtyard. At the back a low wall, with another gateway in the middle; and behind further off, other walls & towers.

Very early morning. Daylight.

Ta-hé discovered. She walks, as if undecided towards the gateway at the back, then turns, hesitates, looks round, and walks away. At last she leans against the wall on the left.

Enter the Emperor, from the Palace, as if looking for someone, uneasily. He sees Ta-hé. He runs (runs towards her)

Emp. Ta-hé! You are there! What are you doing? You are hiding - hiding from me.

Ta-hé No, my Lord.

Emp. I've been looking for you for the last hours. I couldn't sleep. Kang told me it was all right, and that I'll see you in the morning. But I couldn't wait for the morning. I've been looking for you all over the Palace. Where have you been?

Ta-hé I have been here, my Lord.

Emp. Here! You've spent the night out here? But it's impossible. Something's the matter. Oh, I implore you, I implore you to tell me what it is.

Ta-hé Nothing, nothing.

Emp. (with increasing agitation) Nothing? Then why do you come here in this strange way, all by yourself? Why do you avoid me? Why did you rush away from me like that last night in the Throne Hall? And why won't you speak to me now?

Ta-hé I cannot speak to my Lord.

Emp. (Desperately) Don't you see you're killing me! - Killing me with doubt and agitation. Oh! I'm born to be miserable. What ever does happen, that's certain. I am cursed, cursed. I thought today would be the happiest day of my life. I've been looking forward to it for years - singing of it - hardly daring to sing of it - as a sort of Divine impossibility that might, by some incredible chance, come true. And it has come true. Kang has come back, and the Old Buddha has been dethroned, and I am Emperor once more, with freedom, and power, and all the future before

me. And I am miserable. When I was a tree there, in Triumph, with the Old Buddha at my feet, I felt a sudden peace & agony come over me, an indescribable thirst: I thought of you, and you had vanished. you had fled from me and at that moment, when all my wildest hopes were crowned with victory, I wished that I were dead. Look here, Ta-lé. I have carried this little dagger about with me for the last five years; nobody has known; it is poisoned; the slightest scratch is death. I have said to myself that I would use it whenever the worst happened — when it was impossible even to hope any longer. Well, then, all those years, I have always been able to hope; there was always just the dim chance of something happening; and for that I lived. But now — if you have forsaken me — what is the use of all my freedom and my power and the rest of it? I may have gained everything, but if I have lost you, there is only despair in front of me. I tell you, I have felt nearer to using this little dagger during the last hour or two, than I ever did in those five appalling years.

Ta-lé Oh, don't say such things. I have not forsaken you. But what can I do? I have promised not to talk.

Imp. Promised? Who have you promised?

Ta-lé The great magician — Kang.

Imp. Kang! The great magician! — Oh, this is all nonsense. Kang has no secrets from me; you can tell me everything. Really and truly. And Besides, I'll tell you what, I'm a greater magician even than Kang, and so you see I can absolve you of your promise, and you can say whatever you like.

Ta-lé My Lord is a greater magician even than Kang? Then, if I tell you, will you protect me —? I am so frightened —

Imp. Yes, you silly thing, you may trust me to protect you. What is it?

Ta-lé I'll tell you everything. [Hesitating.] It was Kang — Kang who commanded me to do it; and I didn't want to, but he said I must, and then the demon came out of a box, and I was so frightened I said I would, and he made me promise not to tell anybody, not even you, and he said that I should have a jade necklace and so

Imp. And so you thought - you thought -
Ta-hé I had no thoughts. Who am I, to have thoughts? I only thought that I was my lord's servant, and that my lord knew best. But now it is not so - that is all.

Imp. But I don't understand. - The demon - a jade necklace - Kang commanded you - what did he command you?

Ta-hé But I told you, my lord; to go to him - to him -

Imp. To him? What do you mean? To Kang? Oh, why can't you explain?

Ta-hé No, no, my lord, to him, to Jung Lu -

Imp. Jung Lu! - Jung Lu! - Kang told you to go to Jung Lu! - To go to him tonight! - no, no, no, that's impossible; you've made a mistake. Kang told you - it's not true - it's not true. Say it's not true. You don't mean to say that he told you . . Jung Lu! - Was that the price? - The price for . . . ? Oh no, I can't believe it, I won't believe it. Abominations! Tell me it's not true, or -

Ta-hé How you're angry and distressed. I thought you knew. Kang told me that you knew.

Imp. Oh! He told you that, did he?

Ta-hé Yes. But now I'm very glad, because now I see that my lord is not displeased with me. I thought he was displeased with me. I fancied he didn't care for me any more, because he wanted me to go to Jung Lu.

Imp. (raging) To go to Jung Lu? Curse Jung Lu! Curse him! To go to Jung Lu? Yes! To go to Jung Lu, and kill him, kill him! Kill Jung Lu! will nobody kill Jung Lu? - Ah! horror! I am betrayed, betrayed - I know too. Kang, in whom I trusted as if he were myself, he - but I won't think of it, no! How horrible! And they told you - told you, my heavenly angel, that it was I who wanted it, and you believed it, and you went away - oh, how cruel! how dreadful! - without a word - Oh, but it's all right now. Now we know, now we understand; it was all a mistake; now we're together again; there's nothing between us any more; it's all right, all right. - This is a silly place to be in. Let's go - . Ta-hé . Ta-hé . . . . why did you come here? (Turning upon her) What have you been doing here? - You don't answer. - Ta-hé! Tell me the truth, or by heaven I'll kill you. - Where have you been in the night?

Ta-hé I am here; I came here. I was frightened - frightened of the moon. But I called

go anyth further; I can't go through the gate. Oh, my lord, do you think -? do you think?

Imp. I am grown old in horror. There is a darkness... How can I tell? What can I be sure of now? Betrayed by Kang! - And you - you -? - Show me your heart, let me look into your heart, let me read what is written there. Magicians? Was there ever a magician great enough to read what is written in a human heart? - Those twistings, those recesses, those mysteries -! And Love, Love whose lips are pale with terror, and whose eyes are blind with watching, Love, who lies dying in the darkness, he will never know, never know, never know. Doubts, perplexities, ambiguities - these have been his companions since the world began, and will be for ever more. One certainty, one little certainty, is all he asks for; and you bring him nothing but words and looks and protestations - vain, empty, unsubstantial shadows; oh! give him proof, proof, tangible proof - now, here, - proof - - what am I saying? - Kiss me, kiss me, kiss me, kiss me - that is enough - that is all I want - kiss me, and let me forget the rest. For ever so! Can we not be for ever so? All thought, all sorrow, all the pain of living, lost in an infinite embrace!

Ta-hé My dear lord! My dear lord! (While he embraces her, she gets his dagger out of its sheath, & conceals it in her sleeve)

Imp. But Ta-hé! Do you know where we are? I've just recognised. The old courtyard! Do you see? - Over that wall! That is where we first met! What fun! I'll open the gate. Look! There's the well just as it was. Do you remember? [He opens the gate in the low wall at the back, and an inner court is dimly seen.]

Ta-hé (- the well;) Yes, that was where I was sitting when you first spoke to me.

Imp. What a long time ago!

Ta-hé There are flowers there. Shall I pick my lord a flower?

Imp. Are there flowers? Yes, pick me a flower. (In the other side? the courtyard. Can't you see them?)

Ta-hé (Stay here then, and shut your eyes. A moment! -

Imp. Very well. I'm shutting my eyes. [She runs through the gate, softly shuts it

after her. He wants a little fun, calls.) Ta-hé! Haven't you hushed them yet? Aren't you coming? Where are you? You've shut the gate, have you? (He opens the gate, & looks through) Ta-hé! I'm waiting for you. Ta-hé! I can't see you anywhere. (He goes out the inner court, and his voice is heard) You're playing a trick on me. Upon — the court is empty! She's gone! She's gone! (He rushes back on to the stage, and looks round wildly) Nowhere! Where is she? She's gone through the courtyard — there's a door there. (He is about to rush back through the gate, when Kang enters from the Palace)

Kang So here you are. What are you doing? I've been looking —

Imp. What am I doing? You ask that? That door — that door through the courtyard there — do you see it? — Where does it lead to? Where does it lead to, I say?

Kang I think it leads to Jung Lu's apartments — the rooms he uses when he sleeps in the Palace. Why?

Imp. To — to — — oh, you villain! you fiend! You've betrayed me like a devil in Hell!

Kang What do you mean?

Imp. I know all. I found her here; she confessed — told me everything. You frightened her, lied to her, said it was I who ordered it: you told her to go to Jung Lu. Oh, it was mean, cruel, abominable! And now she's gone, she's gone.

Kang This is all rubbish. I don't know what you're talking about. Told her —? It's absurd on the face of it. She's been playing a joke on you. And now I think of it, that door leads to several other rooms besides Jung Lu's. There's a passage from it that joins on to the rest of the Palace. She's just run through to tease you. The truth is you've been over-excited — you haven't been to sleep all night. Do sit down and try and be calm now, and listen to what I've got to say to you. It's important — more important than this nonsense about Jung Lu. We must go. Do you understand me? We've got to go at once. It's not safe here any longer. There are commotions in the city — but that doesn't matter: the serious thing is that the troops are getting

uneasy. The old Buddha turns out to be more of a favourite than I thought. Besides, the tolling of that stupid bell in the Temple of the Buddhas has had a bad effect. Did you hear it last night in the Throne Hall? Well, it was a trick of mine, you know — a fierce, I take it the Old Buddha. It should have been rung earlier — there was a mistake — it was to keep the Old Buddha quiet, in case she might be getting uneasy — to put her off the scent. I bribed the old monks to do it, and they were ready enough; but unluckily the woman's got about now that the Europeans have really been defeated and that Li Hung Chang is returning to Pekin at the head of a victorious army. It's absurd nonsense, of course — utter nonsense. It's our army that's been defeated — I'm certain of that. But everyone believes it, and the soldiers are getting restive. I don't like the look of things; and we can't afford to take risks. We must go. Are you ready? We must start at once.

Emp. Start at once?

Kang Yes, yes. To the European headquarters. We'll get through all right, if we're quick. Come; do you understand?

Emp. I understand. You say we must go. Very well. I say that I shall not go. I shall stay here. You had better go without me. I have no further need of you. Farewell.

Kang What do you mean? You must come. It's impossible. You'll be done for, if you stay.

Emp. And if I go? Shan't I be done for then? I can't believe a word you say to me. You're a traitor. You've lied to her, and you've lied to me. I've done with you. Leave me, leave me for ever.

Kang This is simple madness. You must come, and I'll explain everything as we go. I promise.

Emp. I shall not move from this spot.

Kang Oh Lord —! There's not time for this sort of idiocy.

Emp I'm not keeping you; you can go at once.

Kang What is it! What do you want me to explain? What's the matter? For heaven's sake, tell me, and make haste.

Luf. You have lied to me.

Kang Lied to you? - Oh, well, if you will have it, I have! There! Does that satisfy you? I've lied to you abominably; and it's all perfectly true what she told you about Jung Lu. Now I've made a clean breast of it. It had to be done; there was no help for it. It was absolutely necessary to get round Jung Lu at the critical moment I'll explain exactly how it happened as we go. Only now do come, at once.

Luf. You admit it then? You admit it! You did that with your eyes open! You bartered that wretched girl-? -!

Kang Oh, what is the use of being sentimental? I tell you it had to be done. I didn't want to do it. I was very sorry to do it. But there was no choice.

Luf. And this is your enlightenment, your civilisation, your morality! This is the new life you bring from the West, is it? With Is this is how our old barbarism is to be refined and purified! - What you are By lies, by treachery, by prostitution! - Oh, don't you see you've denying your own self? - Denying all you've ever thought and said and done? You've made it all a contradiction - a hideous contradiction. You set out to make a new clean home for us to live in, and you lay its foundations in the filth!

Kang It's very easy to talk finely and use a lot of big words; but when it comes to acting, it's a different matter. It's no good trying to get over it by talking - a certain amount of dirty work has to be done in the world - whether you're in the west or the east; and in my opinion the world ought to be grateful to anyone who's ready to do that dirty work without flinching. You prefer to look the other way, and hold your nose, and declaim on the virtues of cleanliness. Very well; I don't object; you may, do as you please. But after all, it's you who profit

Luf. I! I profit? You can say that to me? How little you understand me! Can't you guess how I've suffered how I'm suffering? ... Oh! such a mean, cruel thing! And that you should do it to me. To you friend. To me, who never had a secret thought from you, who trusted you, who looked up to you, who loved you, whose whole life (to me) hung upon your least word, who clung to you as my saviour to me, who had entrusted

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the most thing I ever lost in the world)

[illegible] to your charge - you - oh no! I can't believe it! I can't believe it still.

Kang How little you understand me! Do you suppose I care a rap about such sentimental twaddle? Do you think I care a straw about whether your blessed feelings are hurt? Or about what you pleased to call our friendship? or about that stupid fellow? are all the rest of it? Fiddlesticks! Do you really imagine I came back here from Europe in order to hold your hand when you felt whiney, and listen to your confidences about your precious love-affairs? Love-affairs! - meowings of cats in corners! - I've got other things to think of. But as you seem so anxious for the truth, well now you've got it; and I hope you like it. At any rate, we can't stay here talking any longer. We've wasted enough time as it is. Will you come?

Imp. You still want me to come? What for? What's the good of any of it? Stay or go, what does it matter now?

Kang You seem to have forgotten our stay. It's always yourself you're thinking of. Have you forgotten China?

Imp. I am too tired.

Kang Are you going to leave China to the tender mercies of that woman up there? Or are you going to save the destinies of millions by walking a few steps with me out of that gate? - Yes, you'll come! I know you're tired and ill - of course you are. Lean on me. Soon you'll be able to rest. Now I must undo these bolts. (He unlocks the gate on left)

Imp. no, no, no! I can't go out - not like this. I've never done such a thing in my life. And besides, we shall be seized, we shall be brought back - I know we shall -

Kang There's no danger and no difficulty of any sort. There's a carriage out there waiting for us; and there are disguises in the carriage - but we don't need them. The troops will let us through; they're under my orders. If all goes well we shall reach the European in a few hours, and we shall return in triumph. - If only you'll come at once.

Imp. [illegible] Ta-hé? Am I to leave Ta-hé behind? It's impossible. Where is she?)

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knows nothing—

Kang No, nor do I. Perhaps she has gone — where I told her to go — through that door, you know (and) if that case she's safe enough. If she hasn't well the sooner we're off the better, for everything we back out Jung Lu's hands at once (then) directly, and heaven knows what he mayn't do then.

Emp Through the door? — with him —? I am sick and weary. Come then, come. [They are just going out, when he starts back] My dagger! I've lost my dagger! It's not there. Can I have dropped it! I can't go without my dagger. [He begins looking about for it, frantically]

Kang Oh, your dagger doesn't matter. You'll never find it. I'll give you another when we're in the carriage.

Emp. Supposing it was she who took it —! Supposing — supposing she's used it — to do away with herself? — in despair! I can't bear it — to think of her doing that.

Kang Well then don't think of such folly. Think of coming back, in an hour or so, triumphant. Then you'll can make her Empress, or cut her head off, or anything else you have a fancy to, for all I care. Only do come now.

Emp. And leave her? Send a boat? There? Where? My head's burning. Leave her? Among the dragons? I said I'll protect her. I'm dizzy, I'm fainting, help me, I —

Kang Yes, that's right. This is the way. I'll help you. There. (He half carries him out. The Stage is empty for a moment. Then Li enters, from the Palace, carrying a heavy bag. He puts it down for a moment, and consults a schedule)

Li A hundred thousand in gold bars, gold pieces, dollars and other silver coins. That is correct, I think. (He takes it up again, & goes towards the gate on the left. It opens, and an Attendant enters. He walks up to Li, who does not see him.)

Att The Empress? I must see her at once.

Li What? What? Who are you? What is this? I say who are you. (I speak to me like that?

Att. I am Li Hung Chang. Kindly obey my orders.

Li Ai Hung Chang! - my lord! - (Prostrates himself)

L.H.C. Yes. Go at once and tell the Empress that I have returned, and that it is highly important that she should see me immediately.

Li All the Empress, my lord -? That she should see you -? But I'm afraid, my lord, you can't understand . . . there's a difficulty, my lord.

L.H.C. What is the difficulty?

Li Her Majesty, my lord, happens to be locked up.

L.H.C. Locked up?

Li Yes; precisely; locked up. - [The Empress appears on a parapet on the palace wall.]

Empress No. She is not locked up. She is here.

Both Your majesty! (They kowtow)

Emp It's not much good your doing that. Come and help me down from this ridiculous position. (They go to help her) How. Where shall I put my foot? Where shall I put my foot, I say? Ah! That's the right! There! (She comes down.) They locked the door, but they forgot the window. Ninnies! The whole thing was rotten. I shook it, and it came to pieces. Look at this! (she holds up an iron bar) A pretty trophy, isn't it! Shall I brain you with it? (She threatens Li). Take it then, or I'll drop it on your toes - turning in as usual. And so I climbed round by the roof. (To Li) Now leave us. (Exit Li) Ai Hung Chang! What is the news of the Southern Army?

L.H.C. Your majesty must prepare yourself. The news is serious. I am all that is left of the Southern Army.

Emp. There has been a battle then?

L.H.C. Not even a battle: a flight. The troops never faced the guns. They threw down their arms and dispersed. The officers followed them. I found myself alone in the entrenchments

Emp. But that signal of victory?

L.H.C. There was no time for signals, either of victory or defeat. I had received your majesty's message; it was urgent; your majesty was clearly in need of me (and) I determined to present myself before your majesty without the loss of a moment; I am here. I had hoped that reasons might still be asserted with Jung Lu for the defence of the Capital. But I fear there has been some treachery; and your majesty's person itself seems to be in need of protection.

Emp: Yes; there has been an upset here. That reprobate Kang has come back, and he managed to work round Jung Lu in some way or other, and so get hold of the troops. Last night they had the audacity to arrest me, and they made the Emperor - bless his heart! - declare that I was deposed and that he himself resumed the imperial power henceforth and for ever more. You should have seen him; it was like a performing dog. And besides being ridiculous the whole thing was of course quite illegal. However just at that moment, the signal came that the Europeans had been defeated; so I retired to my cell with comparative indifference. Apparently that was a mistake. Their army will be at the gates, I suppose, in an hour or two. It's a pretty kettle of fish. But, Li Hung Chang, you are here. You have wisdom, courage, and fidelity. You understand the urgency of the situation; you obeyed my orders; and you returned immediately. I trust you absolutely, and, since you are with me, I feel as serene as the heavens. What shall we do now?

L.H.C. It is certainly a difficult situation, your majesty. In face of the approach of the Europeans, I should have suggested your immediate departure for the northern Provinces, in order to preserve the integrity of the imperial honours, and to prevent the seat of authority from falling into the power of the enemy. But if Jung Lu is rebellious, it will probably be difficult to leave the palace. His troops, no doubt, have orders to forbid your departure; and his troops are not likely to disobey Jung Lu. My authority would not outbalance his. This makes the outlook serious. We are almost helpless, your majesty. We are surrounded by enemies & traitors, we cannot move, and we have no authority. The only resources that we can depend upon are - ourselves.

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Emp. Yes! Ourselves! And that is enough, I think! We ought to be a match for the rest of the world. There's a great lot — intriguers, dupes, voluptuaries, nincompoops, and barbarians & — without principles, without tradition, without respect for their country or for themselves; while in us the whole strength and virtue of the state is concentrated. The very essence of China herself takes it here. We are China! When we fall, the Celestial Empire falls: but not till then!

L.H.C. Your majesty's undaunted courage does not surprise me; I have known it of old. I trust that I shall prove myself a not unworthy servant of your majesty.

Emp. Li Hung Chang! I create you Count, Duke, and Hereditary Prince of the Empire. I appoint make you a Minister of State. I appoint you Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial armies, and Viceroy of the Provinces of the North. May it never be said that in the blackest hour of my dynasty its representative on earth withheld the reward of devotion. I know a man when I see one, thank Heaven; and let this be a proof of it.

L.H.C. (kneeling) Your majesty honours me too much.

Re-enter Li (from the Palace)

Li If I may make so bold, your majesty, I venture to intrude. There is some news — I may say two pieces of news — which it is important that your majesty should hear immediately. I have therefore taken it upon myself to reappear —

Emp. That will do. Speak.

Li In the first place, your majesty, the Emperor has vanished. Neither he nor Kang can be found anywhere. They are certainly not in the Palace. It seems probable that they have left the city, in order to join the Europeans.

Emp. Confine yourself to the news. It is not for you to make comments. Who said that, Li? continue

Li Secondly, your majesty, there has been a regrettable incident — a murder. Mui Jen has been murdered, your majesty.

Emp. Indeed? young Lin? And pray who has troubled to murder young Lin?

Li One of the young ladies about the Court. I believe she is known to your majesty

Her name is Ta-hé.

Emp. This is a queer story. Is she in custody?

Li Shé is in custody, your majesty.

Emp. (to L.H.C.) What do you say to this?

L.H.C. Our opportunity has come. With Yang Liu dead, it will be easy for me to obtain control of the troops. No one now can possibly dispute my authority. I must act at once. I shall take over the command, restore the troops to their loyalty to your majesty, and if possible seize the person of the Emperor before he leaves the City. While I am away, I must request your majesty to prepare for an immediate departure. We have not a moment to lose. It would be as well if your majesty assumed the disguise of a peasant woman. I shall make the needful preparations now.

Emp. Things are certainly beginning to look up. Supposing I hadn't sent for you—! how so, my lord, and to ask you to hold off the military guard
Or supposing you hadn't come—! [Exit L.H.C.]. Yang Liu dead! murdered by Ta-hé! What can it mean? How did she get access to him?

Li Apparently the guards were instructed to admit her your majesty.

Emp. Oh dear! An assignation! I see. What will the Son of Heaven say? And that explains a good deal.
so she located him like that. Not very obliging. They caught her, you say?
Not if any man's got his wants, it's you.

Li The officer of the guard suspected something; went in, and found her pinning over the corpse. She made no resistance, and confessed at once.

Emp. H'm. She was always very serviceable. But now, I fancy, her services will draw to an end. — As for you, Li, I have a piece of advice to offer you. The price of coffins is rising.

Li The price of coffins, your majesty!

Emp. The price of coffins. Which is I recommend you to invest in one at once. Your heirs will be grateful.

Li Your majesty is pleased to mean—? I understand. I hasten to obey your majesty. (going)

Emp. Wait a moment. I think I have changed my mind. The truth is I must have someone to help me to pack up [for me, and] you're the only person who knows where all my things are. I shall remit your punishment for a fine.

Li Ah, your majesty! And how much will it please your majesty to take?

Emp. How much? As much as there is, I should think. And to begin with, I'll have that bag, there. It looks substantial, and it'll come in very well for the expenses of the move.

Li (his face falling) That bag — a hundred thousand — oh! —

Emp. Oh Li, Li, your face! [absolute] the property of your face! Did you think I could depend upon it? [Is] that like the dear old fellow? His life? Oh that's nothing — a mere trifle: he can lose it without moving a muscle. But his money-bags! Touch them, and it's a very different story. His face begins to fall.

Enter eunuchs & ladies, who throw themselves at the Emp.'s feet.

Eunuchs Mercy, mercy, mercy, great emperor! mercy!

Emp. The rats coming back again? are they? [Ha-ha.] The ship must be sinking itself. Well, we'll wipe off old scores by and by. For the present, we [I'll] must have [we've got] decent officials to do [our] business [for us]. [A] [Li] hideous nuisance, isn't it? [but I always thought it might come to this in the end.] [Well he saved my] life: make much of him. [Exit with Li's & eunuchs. As he does so, enter eunuchs with Ta-hi, come in through the gate at the back.]

Eunuchs (to Ta-hi) This way. You're to come here. You're to wait here [till] for her majesty.

Ta-hi Don't touch me so. Leave me alone. You're hurting.

Li Ah! My pretty lady, my pretty lady! What tricks have you been playing? This won't do, you know, this won't do.

Ta-hi You're [will] to me. I've got nothing to say to you. Go away.

Li But, but, what have I done to offend you?

Ta-hi Leave go of me. Don't, you're breaking my arm. Like that. Oh! Oh!

Enter Li Hung-chang, followed by the Empress and [Li Hung] ministers and soldiers.

The Empress (in a high and apparently almost unconscious state of excitement)

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L.H.C. (to officer) They can stay here for the present. (To Eunuch) Leave that girl alone there. You needn't hold her. She'll be quite safe here. (To Li) Tell her Majesty of this. Half my men came up with them just as they were going through the city gates. There was a scuffle, and Kang was wounded. I don't think he'll recover. Tell her Majesty to be quick. I am going to see about carts. (Exit Li) (to officer) Let no one leave the courtyard until I return. [Exit]

Kang (staggering towards Ta-hé) You cursed meddling, little mad fool! Don't pretend you're innocent. They've told me all about it. What do you mean by it? If it wasn't for this damned thing here, I'd kill you. You've ruined us all.

Ta-hé You're a wicked man.

Kang Wicked am I? Wicked, do you say? Yes, I am wicked, and in another minute I shall carry off your soul to the pit of hell. The demon'll eat you there. The demon! ha, ha! - What put it into your head, you senseless creature, to do that? Who could have dreamt of such a sickening piece of blundering folly? Don't you see the wretched mess you've made?

Ta-hé Go away. You frighten ... you're all bloody. I hate you, you're wicked, and I hate you. And I don't care what the demon does to me now.

Kang What put it into your head, I say? What put it into your idiotic head?

Ta-hé It was he who told me to do it - he - my lord. He told me to kill Jeng Lu.

Kang He? You're lying.

Ta-hé I'm not lying. Ask him yourself. My lord, my lord, isn't it time what I say? I said it all quite true! Didn't you tell me I kill Jeng Lu? [The Emperor makes a feeble gesture]

Kang His majesty is not in a mood for answering questions.

Ta-hé He said that he hated Jeng Lu. He cursed him. He said 'will nobody kill Jeng Lu?' and then he said 'go to Jeng Lu and kill him' - the last several times. and then he said that he didn't believe I loved him, and he thought I'd been with Jeng Lu, and when I said I hadn't he still hardly believed me, and he said he wanted proof - tangible proof - that was what he said; and I saw

what it was - his attempt! I didn't believe him and did love Jeng Lu, and so I said to myself "I'll show him that he's wrong", and I took his little dagger when he wasn't looking, and ran across the street with it - isn't it true, my lord? is it all perfectly true? And I said to myself "tangible proof that" - and I'll give him tangible proof:

I believe she is speaking the truth. It was all some love-affair.

Ta-hé Oh my lord, listen! Have I done wrong, my lord? Why was he so angry with me? Is it my fault that you're unhappy? Oh, what has happened? what has happened? Was it wrong of me to kill Jeng Lu? You ordered me to - "go to Jeng Lu and kill him". That was what you said. Isn't my lord glad that I did it? Isn't it a proof - a tangible proof - that I love my lord better than all the world?

King Much good may it do you Lotte. Ah -! This thing's gone into me rather too deep, I think. Ta-hé - you little fool! - we shall meet in the infernal regions. That man there - it was his fault - he interfered with my cards - I told him not to. I have done what I could. [Dies.]

Ta-hé What's the matter? Something's happened. His face - it's like Jeng Lu's. Oh, I'm frightened. He's dead! He's dead, my lord, he's dead! will his soul come after me really? Why was he so angry with me? I only did what my lord told me. When I went in he held out his arms to me, and said "So you've come after all, Ta-hé?" And I said "Yes, I've come after all, my lord, I've brought thee!" And then - oh speak my lord, you say nothing. Are you angry with me too? What have I done? Doesn't my lord believe I love him now? Speak to me, speak to me! They have been unkind - they have all been unkind to me; only my lord has never been unkind to me; and I don't care what may happen to me so long as I am with my lord. Doesn't my lord know me any longer? Speak to me, speak to me, ~~[illegible]~~ your servant, Ta-hé. ~~[illegible]~~ [The Emperor enters a few moments after that moment the Emperor enters with his suite of ladies. There is a long silence.] ~~[illegible]~~ [The Emperor] [to himself] I have been a little man. [The Prince & King's body.]

~~(illegible)~~

I am your lordship's servant, Ta-hé. He doesn't say anything. Is my lord ill? Shall I sing to my lord? You keep looking – looking, and you say nothing. Oh, stop looking like that. I can't bear it – your eyes – ! – What does it all mean? What are they looking at? Here I am among you all, and you none of you say a word. Why are we out here in the cold? Help, help! Don't you see my lord's ill? Help! I want to go away. I want to escape. Jung Lu's dead; Kang's dead; but all the rest of them are just as wicked. Oh my lord, you save me, protect me! You said you'd protect me. It's the demon – the demon coming. To carry me off! I won't go! I —

[The Emperor makes a very faint movement. At that moment the Empress enters with eunuchs & ladies. There is a long silence while the Empress surveys the scene.]

Empress (to Emperor) So you've been having a little row. (She points at Kang's dead body.) Remove the carcase. – As for this young woman (hesitating) – I know not where on earth is Li? Why doesn't he make haste? I left him grubbing among his money bags (gesturing) burying them under the carpet. – Go and tell him to make haste. – As for this young woman, there's really no time for anything but a summary despatch of justice. (She addresses the Emperor in the declamatory style of one who is used to public speaking.) Doesn't your majesty agree with me? What do you think would meet the case?

The Son of Heaven is doubtful. Precisely, the case is not an ordinary one. It is not usual for ladies-in-waiting to put knives into Commanders-in-chief. No. And then, from some points of view, the action was beneficial – distinctly beneficial. The fortunes of the Dynasty depended on it. If your majesty must agree with me there. If Jung Lu hadn't arrived at that particular moment, where should we all have been now? It is time that Confucius tells us that the proper punishment for murder is death. A life for a life, as he elegantly put it. But then even Confucius was not infallible. Perhaps, in these special circumstances, and as I believe your majesty has sometimes noticed the young woman – am I right? – perhaps, a rigorous imprisonment. ? What does your majesty think? – A whipping, perhaps? – Or a day on bread and water? – Too lenient? The Son of Heaven finds I am too lenient. Very good; if your majesty insists – take

[[Then the Empress breaks down.]

her away and throw her into the well. [The Eunuchs seize her. She screams.]

Empress. No, no! Stop! Not that! I forbid it! No! You can't - you can't - you don't understand - you don't know - you can't do it. You won't? - Mercy! Forgive her. Forgive me - mercy! Do anything you like, but not that. Don't kill her. You shall have everything. I'll give up my rights, my claims, my life - I'll go away, and you shall never hear of me again - I'll - everything. I'll do everything only have mercy - spare her - I implore - I beseech - this once - heaven will reward you this once. [He throws himself on the ground.]

Empress Your majesty is too late. Sentence has been passed. [To the Eunuchs] What are you waiting for? [They stamp her foot, and shouts in an access of passion] Take her away, I say. Take her away. [They take her out by the gate at the back, which shuts after them. The Empress turns calmly to her ladies.] And now have you got that peasant's dress? Help me on with it here; make haste. And another of you go and tell that old donkey to come immediately. [She goes with ladies to a corner of stage.]

Empress. The gate - she - gone - Ja-hé! - all over - all over now. Nothing more ever, ever again. What time is it? When did it stop? Has time stopped? Time has stopped, they say; that's curious. I never thought of that. But I knew it would come. I foresaw it all; and Kang laughed at me, and said it would all come right. But Kang's a traitor, Kang's dead. Ha, ha! Kang's dead and Jung Lu's dead, and all the rest of them are no better than they should be. And I am alone now - I and my dagger. My dagger! Where is it? I've lost it! I've lost my dagger! I must find it. I can't go without my dagger. Did I drop it? Here - here - on the ground. [Is this it? What's this? (He picks up Ja-hé's comb, which had fallen out of her hair as she was struggling with the Eunuchs) This is Ja-hé's comb. Oh, Ja-hé. Ja-hé! I see what you've done - you've taken my dagger, and left me your comb instead. That's a silly trick to play on a hasty person. What's the use of your comb to me, and my dagger to you? You can't do up your hair with my dagger, you know. Ha, ha, ha! But don't you want your comb, Ja-hé? I expect you want it, and I've been making

these stupid jokes all this time - and you ... very Liberal ... you ... (suddenly shrieking) The well! The well! Help! Murder! Murder! You've murdered her! Friends! (the Empress not hearing) It's no good. There's nobody here. I'm by myself. (to herself) I loved her once, and she loved me. So she said. The proof of it? A woman's word? [He drops the coat. Enter Li.]

Li I have disposed of all the cart, your majesty.

Empress (appears from among the ladies, dressed in peasant's costume) Ah! At last! Now look at me! Don't I look charming? Who'd you ever have guessed? And my hair done up so absurdly too! Well, are you all ready?

Enter Li Hung Chang

L.H.C. Your majesty must come at once. The coaches are already in the lower city. There are two carts here. I fear your majesty will feel the discomfort, but the disguise is absolutely necessary. Will your majesty step in?

Empress Oh! this is delightful! Carts! Who'd ever could have guessed I should go off in a cart? And in fancy dress! It's like some sort of ridiculous picnic. It's almost worth while being turned out of one's Capital by barbarians to be able to go away like this. Get in, get in. You Sir can go in the first one. Get along! (Exit Li &c.) That's excellent. Now Li, you and I will go in the second, in the front seat, beside the Driver. Take up your bag. Make haste. And the Aides three can go in the back seat. Go for the bottom of the cart, that'll do very well for the Son of Heaven. Come, your majesty. [They all go out. The stage is empty for a few moments. Then several chinese rush in from the gate on the left, across the stage, & disappear by the gate at the back into the Palace. Then a Russian soldier enters stealthily. He goes across towards the palace - sees the coat on the ground, & picks it up. He looks at it, & is about to pocket it, when a Russian officer runs in, snatches the coat out of his hand, & pockets it himself. Then several more Russian soldiers run in, - all rush into the Palace. Curtain.]

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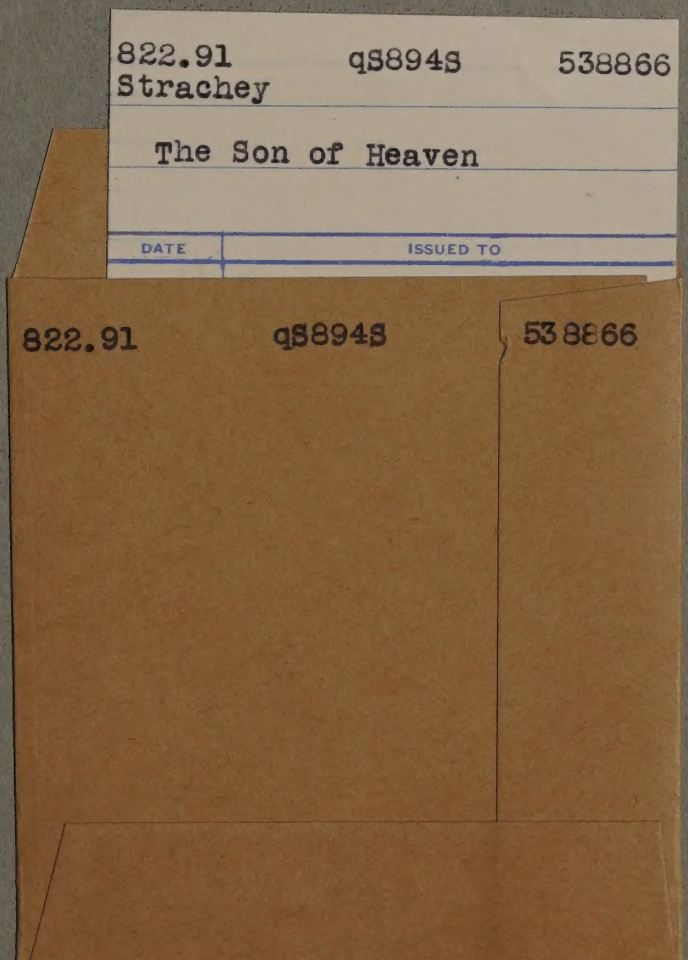
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